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COPING AND ADJUSTMENT OF SPOUSES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

BY

ELIZABETH NAYEBARE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Science

Major in Sociology

South Dakota State University

2016

COPING AND ADJUSTMENT OF SPOUSES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the Master of Science degree and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this thesis does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

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ABSTRACT

COPING AND ADJUSTMENT OF SPOUSES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

ELIZABETH NAYEBARE

2016

This research investigated acculturation of female spouses of international students to life in Brookings, specifically, how they cope and adjust. It was guided by the following questions: what are the socio-economic and cultural attributes of female spouses, and how do they impact their ability to cope and adjust to life in Brookings; what strategies and activities do spouses of international students rely on or develop in order to adjust and cope with life in the United States (Brookings); and what are the processes and experiences of coping and adjustment among spouses of different professional and cultural backgrounds? The investigation was guided by the theory of acculturation developed by John Berry.

Sixteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with spouses that lived on and off-campus. Participants' age, motivation, joint decision making, and level of education were positive pre-acculturation factors, while religion, expectations and work experience had a negative influence. Factors like food, living conditions, and local context/environment played a positive and negative role on coping and adjustment during acculturation, while length of stay, producing children, family size, and knowledge of Brookings had a positive role. On the other hand, isolation and loneliness, lack of interaction with host nationals, dependency on husbands and lack of confidence speaking English influenced acculturation negatively.

To cope with life in Brookings, participants devised strategies like growing and caring for their families; and supporting husbands; some tried to change their visa status so as to pursue

further studies, however they were unsuccessful. Two participants contemplated engaging in entrepreneurial activities, while one planned to document her F-2 experiences. Some of the activities relied on by participants to cope such as domestic chores and enhancing skills were directly connected to the above strategies; others, for example, interactional, recreational, and religious activities aimed at alleviating challenges of coping and adjusting like loneliness and lack of social and emotional support.

Participants experienced other challenges like inadequate finances and unemployment; identity conflicts and unrealistic expectations from third parties; difficulties in child rearing due to clashes of host and home cultures; and inadequate transportation, lack of information, and inadequate access to health care. Despite these challenges, they highlighted positive experiences like acquiring knowledge and skills, growing families, cultivating family intimacy, pursuing personal development and independence. Most experiences were similar for participants from different cultural backgrounds. However, positive experiences were unintended consequences of restrictions imposed by regulations of the F-2 visa. The F-2 visa and its regulations shape all aspects of the SIS experience: strategies, activities, challenges and choices of modes of acculturation. In terms of Berry's theory, two modes of adaptation--integration and separation had been adopted by participants, however, separation was pursued mainly by Muslim participants from Africa and some from Asia. Overall, most participants had adjusted or were still adjusting to life in Brookings.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Since the end of the Second World War, there has been a significant growth in higher education in the United States, accompanied by an increase in the number of international students and families. According to Davis (2001), in 2000 there were 547, 847 students enrolled in American colleges and Universities originating from 186 countries. By 2007, there were 582,984 students, indicating a 3% increase from the previous year (Institute of International Education [IIE] 2007; Myers-Walls et al. 2011:455). As of 2009, the number of international students had reached close to 700,000, a figure that represented over 25% of the world's international students (Teshome and Osei-Kofi 2011:2). In 2014/15 academic year, the numbers peaked at 974,926, with a 10% increase from the previous year¹ (IIE 2015).

According to the IIE (2006), in 2005, 44% of international students were graduate students, and 22% of them were married (Myers-Walls et al. 2011:456). However, the reports did not mention the number of spouses and children accompanying these graduate students (Myers-Walls et al. 2011). Women and children under 21 years accompanying students to the United States come under an F-2 visa, while students come under an F-1 visa. The F-1 visa classifies students as non-immigrants, while the F-2 classifies their spouses and children as dependents. The spouses' and children's status is valid as long as the F-1 student maintains a valid student status (Agarwal and Winkler 1985).

The F-2 visa places a number of restrictions on spouses. As dependents, spouses are not allowed to work or go to further their education, even if college educated (Zhang et al. 2011) and

¹ In 2013/2014, the total number of international students enrolled in U.S. universities was 886,052.

formerly employed (Bordoloi 2015). To do so they must change their visa status to F-1. However, this process is associated with many difficulties like high cost, lack of embassies or consulates in some countries and knowledge of immigration regulations (Bordoloi 2015). Given their lack of finances (Cho et al. 2005; Teshome 2010) coupled with other problems like child care responsibilities (Martens and Grant 2008), those who would have wished to change their status simply give up. Thus it comes as no surprise that most spouses are thrown into a dependent status by the F-2 visa (Zhang et al. 2011; Bordoloi 2015) with the attendant problems highlighted above.

Zhang et al. (2011) further observed that those who manage to work under an F-2 visa work illegally in places like restaurants or as nannies. These jobs do not correspond with the levels of education of most of the spouses. Because of the difficulties involved in changing from F-2 to another visa, for example F-1 (unless one qualifies to study in the United States and has secured an admission), spouses of international students are “condemned” to the domestic sphere. This results in stressful and challenging daily lives, relationships, and experiences which affect their stay in the United States (Teshome and Osei-Kofi 2012).

What has worsened the situation is that unlike in the past when most female sojourners were home makers and therefore their dependent status was unproblematic, today the majority of accompanying spouses are professionals (Teshome 2010). According to Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012:2), “policies and practices that shape the experiences of spouses of international students (SIS) have failed to keep up with the needs of female SIS as a result of changes in gender roles over time.” These scholars noted that although some universities have put in place ad hoc programs for spouses, in general there remains a policy vacuum at governmental and university levels (see also Myers-Walls et al. 2011).

The policy issues highlighted above clearly show that spouses (and children) of international students are not a big concern for government and universities. Because of their legal dependency on students (Bordoloi 2015)², it is no surprise that they remain invisible and isolated even as they continue to live in the United States. In view of the above circumstances, how do female spouses adjust to, and cope with life in the United States in general, and their “new” status of homemaker, in particular?

Statement of the Problem

Although of late there has been a growing interest in documenting the lives of female spouses of international students, information about their everyday lives is still limited (Teshome and Osei-Kofi 2012; Myers-Walls et al. 2011). Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012) lamented the lack of information about how female spouses of international students adjust in light of “contextual shifts” resulting from change of women’s status from that of home maker to professional which has brought about a change in gender roles. They posited that as a result of the limited research, spouses of international students occupy “an in-between space being neither part of academic institutions nor their surrounding communities” (p.2). Pence (2004) argued that the above leads to living isolated lives of “double marginalization” in which female spouses are continuously conceived as homemakers (Kim 2006).

As if the in-between status was not difficult enough, little assistance has been offered by universities or the government to help these women adjust (Kim 2006; Pence 2004). Universities claim that “unlike their husbands, they [SIS] are not required to fulfill any specific task nor to

² Chang (2014) highlighted the similar plight of wives of foreign professionals who come to the United States as legal dependents on H-4 visa.

achieve any positive goal during their sojourn . . .” (De Verthelyi 1995:390). Hence, their concerns are a matter external to universities (Martens and Grant 2008).

Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012) noted that owing to a lack of information about this group, researchers rely on information from similar populations such as spouses of expatriates or undergraduate unmarried students to document experiences of spouses of international students. However, the experiences of these groups are not exactly similar; for instance, there are significant differences in economic status of expatriate spouses and those of students (Teshome and Osei-Kofi 2012). This undoubtedly calls for research into the specific experiences of female spouses of international students.

This research focused on how this category of immigrants acculturates to life in South Dakota. Specifically, it investigated their acculturation³ strategies, processes of coping (including activities and practices), and their outcomes, or adjustment (Berry 1992; 1997; 2005; 2006). I was concerned to find out whether there were any differences in coping and adjustment among spouses from different cultural (nationality) and professional backgrounds. To find out how they were acculturating necessitated canvassing their expectations prior to coming to Brookings. Given that living conditions (Black and Gregersen 1991) and social life (Myers-Walls et al. 2011) affect acculturation, these aspects were also investigated.

Sixteen SIS from four countries of Asia and four from African participated in the study. Eleven SIS hailed from Asia, while five were from Africa. These participants were selected using chain referral and advertising techniques. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Participants not fluent in English were interviewed with the help of interviewers,

³ Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936: 149) defined acculturation as “[t]hose phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.”

Research Questions

In general, this research investigated acculturation of female spouses of international students to life in Brookings, focusing on their coping (psychological) and socio-cultural adjustment (Berry 2006; Ward and Kennedy 1994). Specifically, the following questions were posed: what are the socio-economic and cultural attributes of female spouses and how do these attributes impact their ability to cope and adjust to life in Brookings? What strategies, activities and practices do spouses of international students rely on or develop in order to cope and adjust with life in the United States (Brookings)? Last, what are the processes and experiences of coping and adjustment among spouses of different professional and cultural backgrounds?

Importance of this Research

Problems of adjusting to a new culture and environment faced by female spouses of expatriates or SIS affect the success of expatriates at work (Black and Gregersen, 1991) and students' academic progress (Martens and Grant 2008; Myers-Walls et al. 2011). Therefore, successful adjustment of females goes beyond their own emotional and psychological wellbeing; it determines whether their spouses succeed or fail or are able to adjust (Ward and Kennedy 2001; Teshome and Osei-Kofi 2012; Black and Gregersen 1991). For this reason alone, it is crucial to understand how these women cope and adjust in new environments.

Knowing the challenges experienced by female spouses of international students in new environments, and how they adjust to and cope with these challenges, might act as a pathway to improving their lives (in their own right as individuals), but also finding ways of enhancing their husbands' success in school. In particular, information about SIS might inform school policies aimed at improving the lives of SIS, and all international students. Information from this research might also be useful for creating university-community partnerships with the aim of designing services or activities responsive to the circumstances of SIS.

Organization of the Thesis

This chapter contextualizes the study. Specifically, it highlights the growing numbers of international students and accompanying spouses coming to the United States, and the problems they experience because of their legal dependency. It also poses the research questions that this study investigated and underscores the importance of being concerned with coping and adjustment of SIS. Chapter Two reviews literature focusing on the challenges faced by SIS, strategies they rely on to cope, and factors implicated in their adjustment. It also sheds some light on the legal issues underlying the challenges faced by SIS, and underlines the inadequate attention paid to understanding coping and adjustment of SIS in respect to cultural issues like food choice and consumption.

Chapter Three outlines the study's theoretical framework drawing on the literature on acculturation, specifically John Berry's theory of acculturation. Berry's theory of acculturation is, perhaps, the most popular and widely used theory in studies of cross-cultural adaptation or acculturation. The theoretical framework lays emphasis on Berry's strategies of acculturation, and his acculturation framework, and defines the concepts that guided the formulation of the instruments, for example culture learning. Chapter Four describes the methods used in the study, including design of instruments, sample selection, data collection, field experiences, and data analysis.

Chapters Five through Seven contain the findings. Chapter Five describes participants' demographics, stages of adjustment, acculturation to host environment, modes of acculturation and factors facilitating coping and adjustment. Chapter Six describes strategies and activities of coping and adjustment. Five strategies and four broad activities are described. Chapter Seven discusses participants' experiences of coping and adjustment. Participants' experiences of coping and adjustment were positive and negative. Challenges to coping and adjustment or negative

experiences were conceived as stressors. Five broad categories of stressors, and five positive perceptions of coping and adjustment are described. Finally, Chapter Eight discusses the implications of the findings in light of the theory, research questions, and research on acculturation of SIS.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

My research focuses on “coping” and “adjustment” of female spouses of international students (SIS). Examination of these issues and the processes associated with them requires identifying challenges or stresses faced by the target population, because they are inter-related. Without challenges, there would be little if any need to look for ways to adjust and cope. Hence, this chapter is divided into sections examining challenges faced by spouses, activities and strategies of coping, and factors implicated in adjustment, processes, and strategies of adjustment.

Challenges and Stresses Experienced by Spouses of International Students

Agarwal and Winkler (1985) and Myers-Walls et al. (2011) noted that there has been an increase of international students travelling from developing to developed countries in search of education and better opportunities. As they come to study, some come with their families. Internationalization has basically opened doors for many people and families to venture into new experiences and cultures they are unaccustomed to (Myers-Walls et al. 2011).

Challenges faced by international students’ spouses include: failure to realize their expectations (Zhang et al 2011; Myers-Walls et al. 2011); language problems (Cho et al. 2005; Furnham 2004; Martens and Grant 2008; Teshome 2010); isolation and loneliness (Sawir et al. 2008); identity conflicts (Bordoloi 2015; Kim 2012); homesickness and culture shock (Baba and Hosada 2014; Oberg [1960] 2006); financial difficulties (Teshome 2010); lack of social support (Baba and Hosada 2014; Ward and Rana-Deuba 2000); lack of transportation (Cho et al 2005); gender role disruption (Sakamoto 2006; Martens and Grant 2008); unemployment (Bordoloi 2015; Cho et al. 2005); and lack of opportunities (Bordoloi 2015; Teshome and Osei-Kofi 2012).

The above issues are organized into five subthemes namely: economic problems; unmet expectations and lack of opportunities; lack of transport and poor communication; social and emotional challenges; and changes in gender roles and identity conflicts.

Economic Problems

Financial Challenges. In a study conducted by Cho et al. (2005), Korean spouses complained about their inability to execute ordinary tasks requiring financial resources like shopping and going to the salon. To cope with financial stress, some participants were relying on support from their husbands' parents, while others supplemented their incomes with resources they had saved up at home. However, those that were getting financial support from parents were feeling insecure in their marriages. Participants in a study conducted by Teshome (2010) attributed financial hardships and difficulties in adjusting to life in the United States to small assistantships offered by universities to their husbands. Stress among participants in this research was associated with lack of economic independence and uncertainty about their future. To cope with financial problems, some spouses started small businesses on eBay (p.120), while others engaged in babysitting (p.121).

Unemployment. Despite being barred by immigration policies from working in the United States, Bordoloi (2015:622) reported that some spouses tried to apply for jobs. However most did not get them. Citing Hardill (2002:39), Bordoloi (2015:622) observed that work is so important for spouses of international students because it "provides appreciation, recognition, some control, some self-expression, and often a real sense of security...for them work is good." Indeed this is supported by Cho et al. (2005) who noted that spouses desired to work in order to improve their families' financial status, as well as supplement their husbands' incomes. Unfortunately their visa restricted them.

Unmet Expectations and Lack of Opportunity

According to Zapf (1991) when people move to new places, they have high expectations, but may be unaware of their own limitations. This often results in culture shock. When males leave their countries to go to other countries for further studies, most of their wives leave their jobs and follow them to offer support, keep families intact, and raise children (for those who have them). Some spouses come with high expectations hoping to work and go back to school, but few realize them because of restrictions of the F-2 visa. Hence they tend to be confined at home (Zhang et al. 2011; Martens and Grant 2008).

However, according to Martens and Grant (2008:69) and Sakamoto (2006), some highly educated spouses realize their expectations after changing their visa from F-2 to F-1; the rest face the option of staying at home as housewives (Bordoloi 2015). Still, others that are equally qualified fail to pursue further studies because of childcare responsibilities, language problems, failure to get assistantships, and costly school programs (Martens and Grant 2008:67). Cho et al. (2005) also underscored the effect of parenting roles on pursuit of spousal expectations, coupled with visa restrictions, stringent budgets, and lack of support. Although some SIS meet some of their expectations like going back to school, those who come with unrealistic expectations get disappointed when they find the reality in the United States to be different (Cho et al. 2005).

Lack of Opportunities. According to Bordoloi (2015), one of the main challenges faced by F-2 visa holders is a lack of career opportunities. Despite having a desire to pursue further studies, many spouses cannot because of the problems highlighted above (Bordoloi 2015; Cho et al 2005). Bordoloi (2015) further observed that although some spouses in his study had been allowed to attend a few undergraduate courses, they could not be awarded any credit as this would be a violation of their visa status. In addition, some spouses sought and were offered volunteer opportunities due to ignorance about F-2 visa restrictions on the part of institutions or

departments. Others were dismissed as soon as administrators became aware of visa regulations restricting F-2 visa holders from working. Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012), Black and Gregersen (1991) and Martens and Grant (2008) observed that despite the fact that SIS play an important role in their husbands' success, universities largely ignore them, which worsens their circumstances.

Despite the above challenge, Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012) found that young, recent migrants and unprofessional spouses were not frustrated about accompanying their husbands, or not being able to work or study. These categories of SIS perceived their circumstances as an opportunity to learn English and American culture, and supporting their husbands.

Lack of Transport and Poor Communication

Inadequate Transport. According to Cho et al. (2005), in addition to being financially dependent on their husbands, spouses also lack their own means of transportation and driver's licenses. Because they don't work, women cannot afford to buy cars, therefore they rely on their husbands for their transportation. Participants stated that this causes dependence, tensions and conflicts in the family (p.906).

Lack of Access to Information. Teshome (2010) observed that SIS lack a platform for sharing information. As a result they lack vital information about how and where to change their visas or to access important services in the community, like hospitals, banks, and counseling services (Myers-Walls et al. 2011). This explains why many spouses find it hard to adjust to new environments.

Language Difficulties. The majority of international students and families in the United States come from non-traditional English speaking countries, and some have difficulties speaking English. According to Cho et al. (2005), spouses from Korea experienced language problems. Teshome (2010) also found similar problems among spouses from eleven countries living in the

Midwest. Participants in Cho et al.'s (2005:906) study lamented that the inability to speak English increased dependency on their husbands to accomplish even minor daily activities like shopping and making phone calls. As a result they lacked confidence and reported behaviors, like avoiding phone calls by unplugging them from their cords or avoiding interacting with English speakers. Some lost self-esteem, felt empty, incompetent, isolated and became depressed. However, international students also face similar challenges (Furnham 2004). Zapf (1991:114) observed that "not being understood is a major stressor in a new culture."

Social and Emotional Challenges

Loneliness. Sawir et al. (2008) observed that there are different types of loneliness, namely personal/emotional, social, and cultural loneliness. The first two types of loneliness were studied by Weiss (1973); the third, which results from "absence of the preferred cultural and/or linguistic environment," was found through Sawir et al.'s (2008:148) research. Emotional loneliness occurs when someone is missing close people such as spouses, parents or children, while social loneliness is when one is lacking social networks with peers (p. 152). The causes of loneliness include: lack of close relations; lack of cultural fit (i.e. western individualism versus eastern/African collectivism); language and communication problems; personal inadequacy; and institutional isolation (Sawir et al. 2008).

According to these scholars, female international students in Australia were more likely to be lonely than men. Sawir et al. (2008) expected to find high incidence of loneliness among students from small or non-dominant ethnic groups than those from larger co-national groups. Although their findings point to this conclusion (e.g. 6 (86%) out of 7 from "other Africa" reported having problems of loneliness compared to 30 (61%) out of 49 from Indonesia), the researchers concluded that they expected much higher incidence in the smaller groups than were reported (p.158). Similarly, lack of social networks did not account for loneliness.

Sawir et al. (2008) found that more of the students that reported being lonely had close friends than those that did not; however these friendships were casual and with international students. Among students that did not report loneliness, some had casual friends among local students (p.158). These results suggest that networks do not provide a complete buffer against loneliness, and that quality, rather than quantity, of social networks matters most. In particular, networks with a “cultural content” (p.159) might help students overcome communication problems.

Sawir et al.’s (2008) research found that different students deal with loneliness differently. For instance, some accepted their situation and remained solitary, while others sought social support from their families and relatives, friends, and university staff. Others immersed themselves in different activities (p.164). They recommended that loneliness could be overcome by joining religious groups and interacting with co-national groups.

Lack of Social Support. Citing Barrera (1988), Baba and Hosoda (2014) stated that social support reduces stress and contributes to social wellbeing. They found that social support was positively related to cross-cultural adjustment after controlling for stress factors like academic pressure, financial stress, homesickness, perceived discrimination and social disconnectedness (p.11). The only factor they did not control for was culture shock. All in all their study revealed that “there was a direct relationship between social support and cross-cultural adjustment, and social support partially mediates the relationship between stressful events and cross-cultural adjustment. However it (social support) did not moderate the relationship between stressful events and cross-cultural adjustment among international students” (p.12). Furthermore, they observed that international students with high levels of social support tended to adjust faster than those with less support.

According to Copeland and Norell (2002), families and friends are an important source of social support. This observation is supported by Martens and Grant (2008:70), who stated that husbands and friends of SIS in Canada offered the first line of emotional support to them upon arrival. SIS from both small and big co-national groups expressed satisfaction with the amount of social support and interaction offered by these groups. However, according to Ward and Rana-Deuba (2000:301), it is the quality of interpersonal relations rather than the quantity that matters in the psychological adjustment and loneliness of sojourning individuals. In their research, the quality of both host and co-national interaction was associated with decreased feelings of loneliness (see also Furnham 2004:19). Although sojourners benefited from connections and social support extended by co-nationals and members of the host culture, influence from home culture was more significant for purposes of identity (Ward and Rana-Deuba 2000:302).

Home Sickness and Culture Shock. According to Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991:292) moving from one place to another leads to culture shock. There are changes in norms, living conditions, weather, food, political systems, health care, and language. Culture shock is caused by interpersonal factors like: loss of friends and family; uncertainty; communication and language difficulties; differences in expectations; and having a sense of inferiority, especially among people coming from other countries to the United States (Furnham 2004). Oberg ([1960] 2006) attributed culture shock to loss of signs and symbols of social interaction requiring an individual to learn new norms and values. Baba and Hosada (2014) stated that home sickness is one of the challenges for international students that greatly contributes to stress among them, thus affecting their adjustment to new environments.

According to Oberg ([1960] 2006:144), wives experience more culture shock than their husbands because the latter tend to be busy with professional work similar to what they had been doing in their home countries. In contrast, the former spend most time at home and have to learn

to interact in the new environment, which strains them⁴. Despite this, Baba and Hosada (2014) noted that individuals from countries with different cultures than host communities tend to experience more culture shock compared to those from countries whose cultural values are similar or close to their own. In their research, some spouses liked western culture while others despised it for being indecent and materialistic. Oberg ([1960] 2006:145) proposed that the solution to culture shock is knowing and interacting with people in the host community. This builds confidence, enables the sojourner to know interests of people in the host community and make friends, which eases coping. Zapf (1991) also noted the importance of interacting with the host community, but underlined the challenges involved like lack of resources.

Change in Gender Roles and Identity Conflicts

Unequal Gender Roles. Sakamoto (2006) found that acculturation among married students and their families is a gendered process fraught with power imbalances. For instance, while decisions of females to migrate to the United States were determined by their male partners' decisions to pursue further studies, men's decisions were directed toward their immigration goals. Participants in this study also highlighted imbalances in distribution of family responsibilities⁵ based on gender roles, which suggests that there are differences in acculturation experiences within families.

Sakamoto (2006) observed that unequal gender roles become pronounced because of the regulations of the F-2 visa which make spouses housewives. Apart from or partly due to inequalities in sharing domestic work, women experienced challenges in juggling domestic work,

⁴ Oberg presents an argument based on a period when women were generally housewives. Today fewer women are housewives than in 1960 when this article was written.

⁵ Women do most of the household chores as men concentrate on their studies.

such as child care, and taking care of their husbands. On the other hand, graduate students had challenges balancing their books and family responsibilities (Myers-Walls et al. 2011).

Immigration regulations of F-2 and H-4 visas do not only lead to unequal gender roles and power imbalances. They have also been implicated in: sustaining and even deepening traditional gender divisions based on patriarchy (Bordoloi 2015); domestic violence; inability of women to divorce their spouses (Chang 2014); psychological struggles (Teshome 2010); career or professional fallbacks; and limited educational prospects (Teshome 2010; Bordoloi 2015). Chang (2014) and Bordoloi (2015) attributed the above ills to “legal dependency” arising from spouses’ visas deriving from those of their husbands. According to Bordoloi (2015), the root cause of the above is the “organization of immigration regulations” such as unclear legal and institutional arrangements that make it difficult for spouses to make informed decisions prior to moving to the United States.

According to Teshome (2010) inequalities in gender roles are more felt among professional spouses not used to household chores, coupled with their husbands’ failure to help them. Martens and Grant (2008:58) attributed the severity of the effect of inequalities to changing from being professionals to domestics and independent to dependent. According to Bordoloi (2015), changing from a professional to a housewife is frustrating. As highlighted above, this is worsened by the nature of the F-2 visa, which tags spouses’ status to that of their husbands making them dependent. Black et al. (1991:298) stated that changes in gender roles lead to confusion as those affected have to adjust to the new roles.

Identity Conflicts. Changes in gender roles result in identity conflicts, particularly among former professionals because of their new dependent status and professional immobility (Bordoloi 2015). Bordoloi (2015) observed that people associate their self-esteem with the kind of work they do. A participant in his research highlighted loss of identity in the following words:

Nobody asks you about yourself, your identity, or your sacrifice or self-development...all the topics we have in our community is about family, about their kids, their kids' school, the teachers and the festivals or the trips to Maine (or) Connecticut. They don't really ask, what did you study in your undergrad? What did you do when you were working? (p.616).

In Cho et al.'s (2005) study, participants expressed regret about their careers. Spouses felt deprived because compared to their husbands who would go back to their countries with some achievements, they would go empty-handed. This made them feel like victims without control. According to Kim (2012:110), students are able to resolve their identity conflicts and to reconstruct their identities. It is not clear how spouses deal with identity issues.

Coping with Stress among Spouses of International Students

Coping and adjustment have been defined differently by different scholars. For example, Pearlin and Schooler (1978:2) defined coping as "the things people do to avoid being harmed by strains, or behavior that protects people from being psychologically harmed by problematic social experiences." Different scholars have studied ways spouses cope and adjust to the above challenges.

Kim's (2012) study of spouses from Korea found that many of them coped and adjusted to stressful conditions quickly through electronic communication. Others found activities they loved like drawing, art, church activities, or other meaningful engagements. The activities increased their confidence. Others took advantage of free English classes which helped them improve their English, deal with loneliness, and meet new friends. As such they were not strained by challenges in the new culture. This research reveals that having a visa status which did not allow the spouses to work helped them spend time on other interests.

According to Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012) and Kim (2012), voluntarism is an important activity that spouses rely on to cope. Some women volunteered to teach their language,

culture and music, which attracted many people from different ethnic groups. According to participants in these studies volunteering helped them to cope with stress; it also gave them satisfaction. Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012) observed that spouses who chose to volunteer as soon as they came appreciated the use of volunteering groups, saying they were able to make friends and to learn English. However, professional spouses soon found these activities less fulfilling and abandoned them.

Factors Affecting Adjustment of International Students and Spouses of Expatriates

According to Black (1988) and Oberg (1960), “[Cross-cultural] adjustment is the degree of psychological comfort with various aspects of a host country” (Black and Gregersen 1991: 463). As such, Black and Gregersen (1991:463) argue that “the basic cross-cultural adjustment process is the reduction of uncertainty by learning which behaviors are appropriate in the new culture and which ones are not.” Citing Black (1988:280-282), they further observe that the “factors that tend to reduce the uncertainty of what to do and when to do it or what not to do and when not to do it in the host country culture generally facilitate adjustment, while factors that increase the uncertainty tend to inhibit adjustment” (p.463).

Acculturation or adjustment has been previously identified as having four stages. According to Yeh (2001), Chinese female spouses in his study experienced the honeymoon, exploratory, struggling, and settle down stages. During the honeymoon stage, they had both exciting as well as negative experiences; in the struggling period, they had challenges since they couldn't find jobs and struggled with language; and lastly, in the settled down stage, they overcame language barriers, found, and settled in jobs⁶, established meaningful relationships and met some personal, although temporary goals (p.72-73).

⁶ Despite being in violation of immigration laws, it appears these were informal jobs where women did not need to prove their immigrant status.

Baba and Hosada (2014: 11) investigated factors that lead to cross-cultural adjustment among international students and found that apart from English competency, demographic variables like sex and age, and other factors such as length of stay in United States were not strong indicators of cross-cultural adjustment. Academic pressure, financial stress, homesickness, discrimination, and culture shock were negatively related to cross-cultural adjustment.

Myers-Walls et al. (2011) observed that the greater the cultural differences between international students' cultures and the host culture, the more adjustment stressors international students are likely to experience. Owing to the close relation in cultural patterns and values between Europe and the United States, European international students are likely to be more connected and to obtain social support than their Asian counterparts. Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012) reported a case of a female student from Holland who reported having less acculturation stress on account of belonging to a culture similar to that of the United States compared to other international students.

According to Yeh and Inose (2003), Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012), and Myers-Walls et al. (2011) Asian international students' adjustment and coping is complicated by difficulties with English language. Finally, Berry and Sam (1997), Berry (2006), and Yue and Le (2012) observed that different factors affect psychological adjustment. At the societal level these may include political context, economic situation, attitudes towards out-groups, and social support at home and in the new environment. At the individual level factors include demographics, like age, and personality which affects psychological adjustment; others include expectations, cultural distance, length of stay, and acculturation strategies.

Noting the weaknesses in previous research, Black and Gregersen (1991) observed that although the concept of cross-cultural adjustment has been defined in uni-dimensional terms (e.g. in the work of Torbiorn 1982), it is a multi-dimensional construct (Black 1988). Black and Stephens (1989) observed that whereas the environments to which spouses adjust to vary, both

expatriates and their spouses adjust to a number of things: “[E]xpatriates adjust to work, interaction with their hosts, and the general environment. Their spouses adjust to interacting with host nationals and to the general, foreign environment” (Black and Gregersen 1991:463).

There are two types/forms of adjustment, anticipatory and in-country adjustment (Black and Gregersen 1991). Anticipatory adjustment refers to adjustments individuals make before entering a new culture that “can significantly affect their adjustment once they arrive in the host country” (Black and Gregersen 1991:464). Previous experience living in a foreign country is one of the mechanisms that facilitate cross-cultural adjustment since it enables “spouses to extrapolate principles from past international adjustment experiences, information from which they can use to reduce uncertainty in the upcoming transition” (Black and Gregersen 1991:464).

Another important variable for anticipatory adjustment is an individual’s motivation to make the transition to the new culture, or to make the adjustment. Having a favorable opinion about the move has a positive relationship with cross-cultural adjustment (Black and Gregersen 1991; Torbiorn 1982). Similarly, pre-departure training has a positive effect on adjustment, especially self-training by the spouse more than that provided by the firm. However, in general training enhances adjustment as it is likely to reduce uncertainty. Such training is a source of information about the new culture and educates the would-be entrant on how to interact in the new environment (Black and Gregersen 1991: 471).

In-country adjustment follows the honeymoon period which corresponds to the initial few weeks of excitement that are usually followed by a period of decline in morale, which is followed by a period of learning, through trial and error, the everyday demands of life in the new environment (Torbiorn 1982). One of the factors that facilitate in-country adjustment is the availability of social support from nationals of host countries. Social support from nationals is important for adjustment because unlike their spouses that are working or studying, women tend to be isolated. Host nationals understand the culture, therefore may provide information and explain the host culture, and provide feedback on appropriateness of behavior. This information

and accompanying social cues can collectively serve to reduce uncertainty regarding the host culture, hence facilitating adjustment. Takeuchi et al. (2007) found that spouses who come from large co-national groups tend to adjust quickly because they get social support from those big groups.

Social support is also derived from the spouse of the employee. Spouses provide information about the host culture (Black and Gregersen 1991). Zhang et al. (2011) found that husbands play an important role in helping their spouses cope and adjust through words of encouragement, comfort and quick response to their wives' needs.

Living conditions, for example shopping, laundry, and food storage, are an important factor in cross-cultural adjustment (Harvey 1985). If the living conditions are bad or poor they are likely to affect adjustment negatively. Cultural novelty is another in-country factor that affects adjustment (Black 1988). Black and Gregersen (1991:466-67) hypothesized that "the more novel and different the host culture is compared to the home culture, the more uncertainty one would expect about the appropriateness of behaviors; as a consequence, one would expect the spouse's adjustment to interaction with host country nationals and the general environment to be more difficult." Culture novelty was found to inhibit spouses' general adjustment (p.471).

Conclusion

This chapter discusses the literature on cross-cultural adjustment, focusing mainly on spouses of international students. The literature is organized around three themes namely: challenges of acculturation faced by SIS; coping of SIS; and adjustment. Challenges were organized around five sub-themes namely: economic; gender role disruption and identity conflicts; unmet expectations and lack of opportunity; lack of transport and poor communication; and social and emotional issues. They form the bulk of the literature. Coping focuses mainly on

the strategies and activities relied upon by SIS, while the literature on adjustment discusses stages, types of adjustment, and factors implicated in the process of adjusting.

Despite identifying numerous social stress factors SIS need to cope with, the bulk of challenges discussed are psychological. Information on how SIS adjust to cultural issues like food is inadequate. Apart from a few scholars like Berry and Sam (1997) who mentioned food as one of the problems sojourners grapple with, and Black and Gregersen (1991) who discussed food storage, issues of food have not received much attention. Information on food availability in local stores or strategies for obtaining food from home countries, food choices, food preparation, or even acculturation to local foods is lacking. In view of the fact that Brookings is a small city and is far from the major city of Sioux Falls, it is possible that SIS face challenges in regard to food. Therefore the research also investigated how SIS cope with food and other cultural issues.

In addition, few studies have examined differences in coping and adjustment of spouses from different cultural (nationalities), and professional backgrounds. Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012) found that professional and non-professional, new and long-term spouses (those who have stayed longer in the U.S) had different experiences of acculturation and stresses. However, they did not emphasize how differently (in terms of the strategies and processes) the above categories of SIS cope and adjust to life in the United States. It was also noted that spouses from cultures distant from Eurocentric cultures have a harder time adjusting in the United States. This research investigated how SIS from different cultural (nationality) and professional backgrounds who are long and short term SIS cope with life in Brookings.

This research focuses on in-country adjustment, specifically interaction with host nationals and the general environment (Black and Gregersen 1991). However, given that to adjust and cope SIS not only rely on interaction with host nationals but also those from their

countries, the research also examines the strategies they use to interact with individuals from their countries.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This research is guided by John Berry's theory of acculturation. Berry's theory of acculturation is elaborated in a series of publications dating from the 1970s. According to Ward (2008), Berry's work on acculturation has set the pace in organizing and synthesizing research and theory on acculturation and in modeling and crafting frameworks for processes of acculturation (p. 105-06). The main concern of this theory is: "How do people raised in a different cultural context manage to adapt to a new context that affects them?" (Berry and Sam 1997). Berry and Sam (1997) highlight numerous factors that usually lead to the above cultural shifts or changes (acculturation) including immigration and colonization.

Conceptualizing Acculturation

Acculturation is conceived as a group and individual-level phenomenon (Berry 1992). At the individual level, acculturation refers to "a change in the psychology of the individual" (Berry and Sam 1997; Berry 1992, 1997). Changes that occur in the individual's psychology like changes in attitudes, values, abilities and motives are called *behavioral shifts*. At the cultural level, there is a need to understand "[k]ey features of the two original cultural groups...prior to their contact, the nature of their contact relationships, and the resulting cultural changes in both groups and in the emergent ethnocultural groups, during the process of acculturation" (Berry 2006:289).

Berry further notes that "At the individual level...we need to consider the psychological changes that individuals in all groups undergo, and their eventual adaptation to their new situations" (Berry 2006: 289). Individual changes include "behavioral shifts in ways of speaking,

eating or dressing,” or “problematic” but still psychological and stressful norms that produce “uncertainty, anxiety, and depression” (Berry 2006:289). Berry conceives of these changes as *acculturative stress* (Berry 2005:708).

The concept of *behavioral shifts* is associated with other concepts like *culture learning* and *culture shedding* (Berry 1992, 1997). Shifts in behavior involve acquiring or learning new behaviors (culture learning) or unlearning those already acquired in the immigrant’s culture (culture shedding). According to Berry (2005:707), these changes are non-problematic. But, although Berry and others conceive of individual acculturation as a psychological phenomenon, clearly it goes beyond this. To view culture learning and shedding as a narrow psychological process ignores the social aspects of “culture” and of “learning” or even “unlearning.”

The above concepts are important insofar as the strategies of acculturation (see strategies below) pursued by acculturating individuals are concerned. Apart from the strategy of separation where an individual rejects the host culture and sticks to his own, all strategies involve some degree of culture learning and shedding. In regards to this research, the above concepts (culture learning and shedding) were the basis for investigating aspects of the host (Brookings) culture that participants had adapted to.

According to Yue and Le (2012), culture learning focuses on “intercultural contact and regards social interaction as a mutually organized and skilled behavioral performance” (p.137). It is concerned about the new comers’ intercultural competence, ability to communicate and knowledge of the host society. At the same time culture learning addresses whether the individual seeks or is seeking knowledge about the host culture, which then subsumes the person’s competence in his or her own culture’s communication and knowledge (Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, 2001).

In contrast, acculturative stress is a type of stress whereby stressors (e.g. anxiety, depression, feeling marginalized and alienated) are rooted in the process of acculturation. Acculturative stress involves conflict and results in new forms of behavior and poor adaptation (e.g. poor health, identity confusion, problems in school and work) (Berry 1992, 2005).

The central idea revolves around the question of how to acculturate (Berry and Sam 1997). In other words, acculturating groups and, for that matter, individuals are faced with a choice. Berry presents this choice as a dilemma. Acculturating individuals ponder two issues: “cultural maintenance (to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered important by individuals, and their maintenance strived for) and contact and participation (to what extent should individuals become involved in other cultural groups, or remain primarily among themselves)” (Berry 1997:9, 1970; Yue and Le 2012). Berry (2006: 290) however notes that the above questions are “relative preference(s);” individuals may or may not take any of the choices⁷.

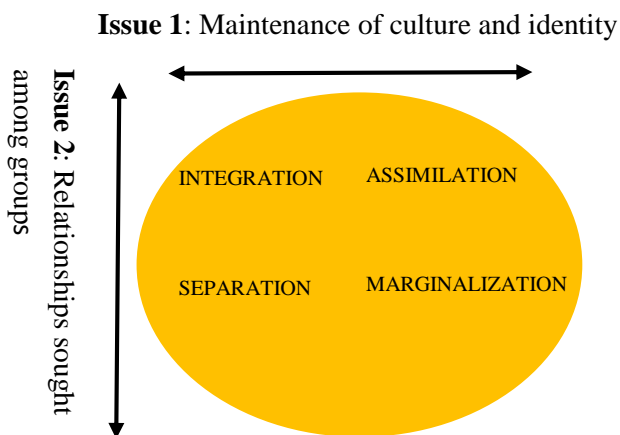
Following from the above, acculturation is a bi-dimensional phenomenon (Yue and Le 2012) composed of *attitudes* and *behaviors* practiced in everyday interaction (emphasis original-Berry 2006). According to Berry (2005), attitudes constitute “an individual’s preference about how to acculturate”; behaviors are “a person’s actual activities exhibited in day-to-day intercultural encounters” (p.704). This distinction is crucial as far as this research is concerned. Not only did the research investigate the choices spouses of international students make about how to acculturate (i.e. their attitudes) it also explored the activities through which they go about it.

⁷ This observation is important in particular because it reflects the four strategies that emerge out of the choices made by individuals in regard to the two dilemmas. But the question that remains is whether individuals really ponder these issues at all.

Strategies of Acculturation

Berry (1992, 1997, 2005, 2006), and Berry and Sam (1997) identified four strategies of acculturation: integration; assimilation; marginalization; and separation. These strategies stem from the above two issues/dilemmas, that is, to maintain one's culture or to participate in the host culture. Integration is adopted when individuals value both their cultural identity and want to maintain it, and interact with the host cultures. On the other hand, assimilation occurs when the acculturating individual engages in day-to-day interactions with the host culture, but is not inclined to hang on to his or her culture. When the individual disdains interacting with the host culture but is more interested in his/culture, the strategy is called separation. Finally, the strategy of marginalization is defined when the individual has no or little interest in maintaining his culture,⁸ and also has little interest in interacting with his hosts (Berry 2006: 290-91). These strategies are illustrated in the model below:

Figure 3.1: Strategies of Acculturation of Non-Dominant Groups



Adapted from Berry (2006:291)

⁸ According to Berry (2006:291) this might arise from “enforced cultural loss.”

The above modes of adaptation have been found to be empirically related with behavioral shifts and acculturative stress (Berry 2005; 2006). For instance, fewer behavioral changes result from separation; assimilation is associated with greater behavioral changes. On the other hand, integration results in selection of behavioral repertoires from both the host culture and heritage culture. Finally, marginalization is associated with loss of many aspects of sojourners' culture, and development of deviant behaviors (Berry 2005: 708).

This research is based on the theoretical constructs in the above model to investigate and analyze the strategies chosen by female spouses during the process of acculturation. A key assumption of the theory/model is that sojourning individuals "have the freedom to choose how they want to acculturate" (Berry 2006:291). Since female spouses are ideally free to acculturate, Berry's strategies were upheld as general acculturative orientations of F-2 visa holders. However, it is important to note that the terms Berry uses focus on aggregates, i.e. large groups such as international students. They do not take into consideration smaller groups like spouses of international students whose legal status is ambiguous and uniquely impacted by institutional structures like immigration policies (Bordoloi 2015).

Although they are free to come to the United States, immigration regulations restrict F-2 visa holders from seeking formal education and employment (Bordoloi 2015). This is a fundamental issue as far as this research is concerned as it puts F-2 women in a twilight zone; on the surface they are free to choose how they want to acculturate but in reality their choices are constrained. Unlike their husbands who are allowed to study and work, hence having more opportunities to interact with the host community, women are confined in their homes. Therefore they are significantly restricted from interacting freely and extensively with the dominant culture.

Previous research has paid scant attention to the above theoretical problem. Acculturating groups (even those that seemingly are free) do not have the same institutional/legal

status. Acculturation is mediated by institutional norms that affect acculturating groups differently; it is not simply a matter of different ethnocultural groups or individuals choosing to interact or not to interact as posited by Berry. Despite noting the importance of immigration policies (Berry 1997), perhaps the most important element of Berry's theory--choice--ignores the institutional context.

Acculturation Framework

Berry (2005:704) and Berry and Sam (1997) argue that choice of strategy for acculturation depends on a variety of individual and group-level factors, some of which occur before and during the process of acculturation (see also Berry and Sam 1997). Berry and Sam (1997) stated that group-level⁹ factors both in the society of origin and that of settlement¹⁰ combine to produce group acculturation. Group acculturation influences individual/psychological acculturation. However, this is mediated by moderating factors prior to and during the process of acculturation. The outcome of these processes is psychological and socio-cultural adaptation¹¹. This research focuses more on socio-cultural adaptation.¹²

⁹ Group-level factors in the society of origin include ethnographic characteristics like religion, demographic factors (e.g. crowding, economic conditions and poverty) and political factors (e.g. repression), while factors in the society of settlement include immigration policies and history, attitudes toward specific groups, and social support.

¹⁰ Berry's acculturation framework ignores the distinction between temporary (e.g. international students and their families, and permanent sojourners). Despite this, the factors highlighted in the framework apply to both categories of sojourners.

¹¹ According to Ward et al. (1998:279), psychological adaption "is associated with psychological wellbeing or emotional satisfaction" while socio-cultural adaption is related to the ability to "fit" in or negotiate interactive aspects of the host environment."

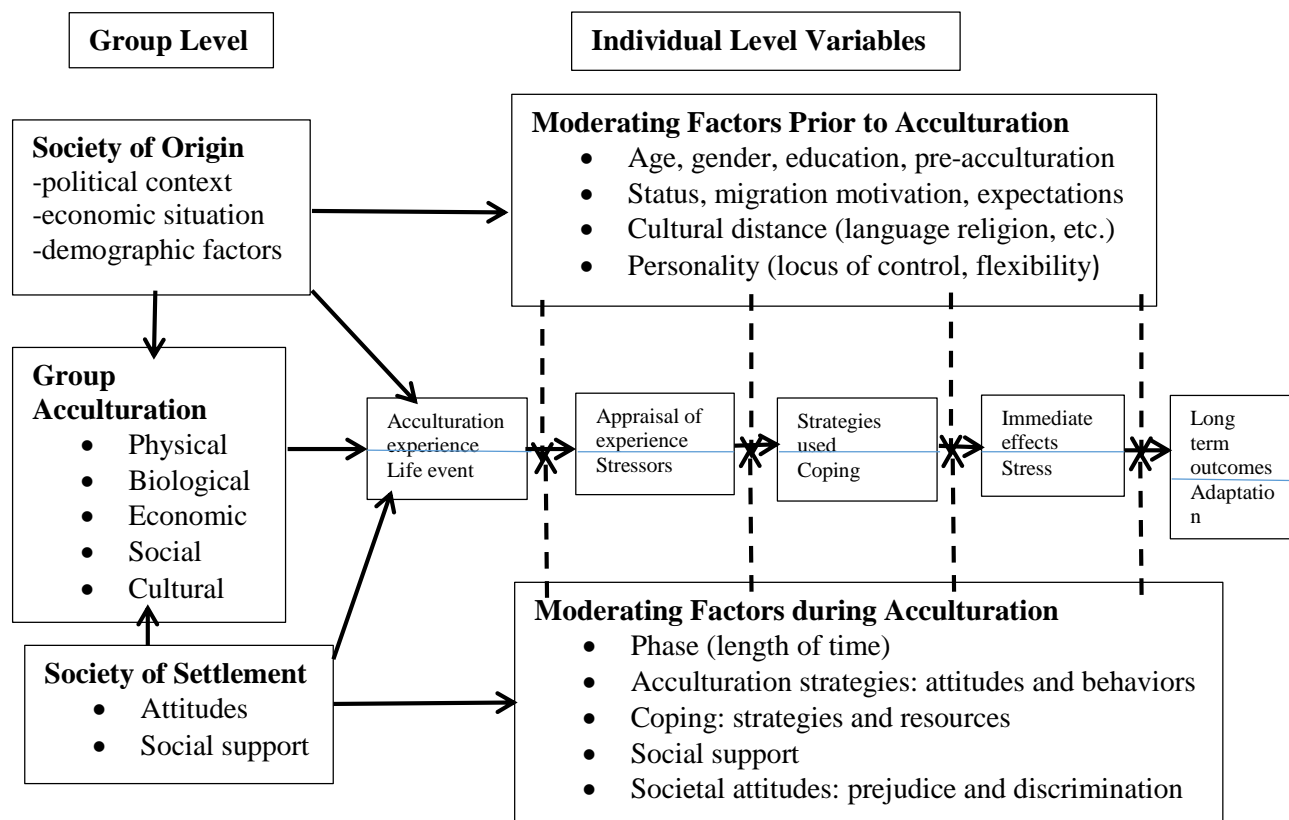
¹² According to Ward et al (1998:279), despite being conceptually distinct, the two forms of adaptation impact each other.

Despite Berry and Sam's (1997) insistence that to be complete a study needs to investigate both group and individual factors of acculturation, the current research was limited to the individual level due to time and resource constraints. As mentioned above, the target group (female spouses on F-2 visa) is a special category whose concerns were likely to be submerged by those of international students if they had been subsumed under this group. Still, some variables like religion and language, which cut across both levels--individual and group--were investigated.

Berry highlights moderating factors prior to acculturation like age, gender, education, and cultural distance, and those during acculturation, such as motives for migrating, expectations and coping strategies and resources. In addition to the above, Berry outlines specific factors involved in psychological acculturation, those associated with behavioral shifts like culture learning and shedding, and those related to acculturative stress such as stressors¹³. For purposes of illustration, the model developed by Berry (1997:15) is adapted wholly, however (as mentioned above), the focus is on socio-cultural adaptation/adjustment.

¹³ For a detailed presentation of the variables and their features, see Berry and Sam (1997:301-302).

Figure 3.2: Acculturation Framework



Based on the above model, this research theorizes that adjustment and adaption of female spouses on F-2 visa is a function of their acculturative experiences, coupled with their valuations of these experiences, and the strategies they rely on to cope. These variables are moderated by individual factors prior to acculturation like age, education, language, and religion; as well as factors during acculturation for instance, length of stay in Brookings, activities and strategies of coping, acculturation strategy adopted, and amount of social support available to them or that they are able to mobilize.

Conclusion

Berry's strategies of acculturation, namely integration, assimilation, marginalization, and separation, are by far the most popular aspect of his theory of acculturation among researchers. To avoid focusing on a narrow aspect of the theory and risk watering it down, this chapter links

these strategies with other aspects of Berry's theory like his acculturative framework. The framework conceives acculturation as a process involving factors prior to and during a sojourner's acculturation. This process is moderated by individual factors and factors that occur during acculturation like length of time and strategy adopted. The theory links concepts like behavioral shifts, culture learning and shedding, and acculturative stress to factors identified in the acculturation framework, and the strategies. Concepts like culture learning and shedding guided the formulation of questions for the unstructured interviews. They also guided the analysis (Myers-Walls et al. 2011).

While this theory has been used in studying different types of sojourners including international students (Myers-Walls et al., 2011), these applications have all confirmed the theory's utility and relevance to the current topic. The theory is relevant not just because of its explanatory power, but also because of its conceptual simplicity and clarity. Its main shortcoming is its poor treatment of the institutional context, particularly immigration laws and regulations. According to Bordoloi (2015:610), there is a need to question institutional policies that place SIS in a dependent and marginal position, shifting the burden of coping onto them. Although this issue was not delved into deeply, it provides a sharp lens for contextualizing and discussing findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological approach used to study the experiences of spouses of international students (SIS) and activities and processes of coping, and adjusting to life in Brookings. The chapter describes the sample size, sampling procedure, and techniques of collecting and analyzing data. It also discusses the rationale for the choices made during interviews, challenges encountered and how these were resolved.

Target Population

This research was conducted in the City of Brookings, South Dakota, where South Dakota State University (SDSU)--the institutional focus of the research--is located. Brookings is a small, quiet, city. It is predominantly White, with a few foreigners, the majority of whom are international students. Therefore there is a high possibility for students and their families to face numerous acculturative challenges. With SDSU attracting the biggest number of all foreigners in Brookings, a significant portion of who are female spouses, its choice as the focus of the study is opportune.

The targeted population was SIS whose husbands were enrolled at SDSU at the time of the interview. All participants were residing in Brookings, with the majority living off-campus. To ensure the quality of the data, I made sure that all participants met certain requirements. For example, all had to be F-2 visa holders (Salganik and Heckathorn 2003). Participants were from different regions of the world. As I had anticipated, the majority (11) came from Asia while the rest (5) came from Africa. Asian countries where participants came from include: Nepal, India, Bangladesh and China. Participants from Africa hailed from Libya, Congo, Ghana and Ethiopia.

Due to cultural differences between China and other Asian countries, participants from China were categorized separately thereby forming three “continental” subdivisions namely Asia, Africa and China. I had anticipated interviewing 24 spouses, but only 18 spouses participated as explained below. In addition, owing to the presence of and interference from third parties¹⁴, two of the 18 interviews were not analyzed to avoid contamination (Boeiji 2004). Boeiji (2004) argued that third parties bring in their perspectives, which may affect the credibility of findings. Therefore, the final number of participants was 16.

Sampling and Recruitment of Study Participants

Chain Referral. Although in theory it is easy to know how many international students have spouses at SDSU and therefore to establish the number of female spouses, practically it is difficult to select them. Female spouses are “invisible” owing to the nature of their visa, coupled with unavailability of University programs that could enhance their visibility. Most of the time, these women’s operations are restricted to their houses and access to them is restricted to their husbands. Secondly, owing to their isolation, some were unwilling to participate in research concerning their lives. Hence, finding and recruiting for this research was difficult. Techniques of probability sampling were not useful for this study population. As such I used non-probability techniques like chain referral and social networking.

Chain referral is “traditionally” known as snowball sampling (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). It’s one of the best techniques used to recruit hard-to-reach populations for which there is often no sampling frame(s), and where one is difficult to create, and to research sensitive topics (Penrod, Preston, Cain and Starks 2003; Salganick and Heckathorn 2004). In this case, a few

¹⁴ While conducting these interviews, family members like husbands and in-laws insisted on being present and participating directly in the interview. Since I was conducting personal interviews rather than focus group discussions, I chose to omit the interviews that were affected.

participants are identified and interviewed, and researchers ask them to give names of other people they know or contact them in order to participate in the study (Welch 1975; Salganik and Heckathorn 2003, 2004). Participants tend to refer people that are in their networks, which is important for obtaining information that may be hidden in those networks (Salganik and Heckathorn 2004; Browne 2005). The problem with this sampling method is that a researcher has little or no control over the recruitment process, which means that friends act as “gate keepers.” As a result they can increase or inhibit access to potential participants (Penrod et al. 2003).

To recruit the initial “seeds” (Salganik and Heckathorn 2004), I asked my Nepalese, Chinese, African and Indian colleagues from the Departments of Sociology and Rural Studies and Plant Science to help me recruit their wives or SIS from their countries. Some were initially hesitant, but later agreed to help. The first SIS I interviewed was Joy¹⁵, a spouse to a workmate from Nepal. Joy (Nepal) introduced me to Rita and Cissy, also from Nepal. Despite agreeing to be interviewed, these participants lacked confidence to participate because of fear that their English was insufficient. It was not until I interviewed their friend Joy that they gathered the courage to be interviewed.

In addition to the above, two Nepalese students from the Department of Sociology convinced their wives to participate in the study. However, one of the spouses (Lilian) was hesitant to participate until she attended an event I organized to explain the research and recruit participants. I recruited Pamela (China) and Phiona (China) and all SIS from Libya with help of a student from the Department of Sociology. Pamela (China) was immediately interested in the study and contacted me. In contrast, Phiona initially declined to participate until we met face-to-face and I explained her rights. I also promised to insure confidentiality. We exchanged several emails before she finally was convinced. When I interviewed her, I learned that she was

¹⁵ All names of participants are pseudonyms.

struggling to acculturate. This explains why she was initially reluctant to participate in the study. Unlike others who invited me to their homes, Phiona's interview took place in one of the public places at SDSU.

Other spouses from China who had agreed to participate also kept giving different excuses until they gave up on the study. It is not clear why SIS from China were reluctant to participate in this research, however, it is possible that their husbands influenced them¹⁶. Pimental (2000:33) highlighted the prevalence of patriarchal domination in China. She observed: "In this system, the marital relationship was hardly the focus of romantic expectations. Marriage was universal and utilitarian, conducted for the purposes of having children and furthering the larger family group."

Spouses from Libya were also mobilized through chain referral and social networking. A male Muslim student from Department of Sociology introduced me to a female Muslim student on campus that was very active in the mosque and knew almost all Muslim SIS in Brookings. After I explained the research to her, she agreed to introduce the idea to two Muslim female SIS with whom they were in touch. The two SIS also contacted others, and I was invited to meet them at their mosque. Seven SIS were present at this meeting. I explained the study to the SIS through an interpreter.

However, due to concerns about their English language skills, some SIS requested me to conduct a focus group discussion instead of personal interviews. Others said that their husbands would not allow them to be interviewed unless they were present or interpreted for them. When I informed them that I regretted that I could not change the study design at that stage, four out of the seven SIS present immediately said that they would not be able to participate because their

¹⁶ Elsewhere in this report, this problem is referred to as third-party intervention.

husbands would not allow them. Only Dora, Sarah, and two other SIS, one from Egypt and another from Saudi Arabia, agreed to participate. However, the latter two interviews (SIS from Egypt and Saudi Arabia) were not analyzed because of third party intervention.

Claire (India) and Sandra (Ethiopia) were referred to me by participants who had already been recruited and knew the duo from family student housing where they were neighbors (Penrod et al. 2003). Although both were willing to be interviewed, they were worried about their English. Claire decided to get an interpreter among her friends, while Sandra chose to be interviewed without an interpreter¹⁷.

Advertising. The second technique I used to recruit participants was putting posters in laundry rooms of student family housing where most SIS live. Others were hung in the University Lutheran Centre where SIS meet regularly for ESL classes, US Conversations, knitting classes and other social events. On the posters I invited SIS to attend and invite others to an event I was organizing for purposes of recruiting participants. The event, scheduled to take place at the University Lutheran Center, was made possible by a generous grant from Women and Giving of South Dakota State University.

The event was attended by 16 SIS, and lasted 90 minutes. SIS had been invited to come with their children. The majority of those who attended were from University family student housing, a few meters from where the event took place. Participants were served refreshments. After explaining the research, I requested them to volunteer personal information like physical addresses, day and time convenient for them to be interviewed, and to state if they needed interpreters. The information obtained enabled me to follow up with five SIS who agreed to be interviewed, hence saving time.

¹⁷ But her competency in English was low.

I had anticipated that the event would attract many SIS, but as mentioned above, only 16 attended. Of those that eventually participated, only Anne, Maria and one spouse (who later dropped out) reported that they got the news about the event from posters. The rest attended because I contacted them directly, as well as through other means like Facebook. Having been a SIS and lived in family student housing, I knew participants like Jane from Congo, Amanda (Ghana) and Christine (Nepal)¹⁸. Therefore it was not difficult for me to recruit them.

It is clear from the above that to recruit hard-to-reach participants successfully, one needs to rely on more than one technique. In this case, chain referral was the most effective technique because through it I was able to recruit 11 participants. The rest were recruited via advertising. Still, it is difficult to gauge the effect of other techniques.

Methods of Data Collection

The method of data collection used in this study was semi-structured interviews (Appendix I). I had also planned to use photo voice so that participants could capture images of their experiences like stressful events and circumstances, however, some of the participants that were given cameras were reluctant to take photos; others took them but did not explain well their significance. By using semi-structured interviews, I was able to operationalize the main concepts of the study which were: culture learning; in-country adjustment (general environmental and interactional adjustment); stress and coping (positive and negative stress); and motivation.

Interviews were used to gather data on background attributes of informants like age, length of stay in the United States, cultural background, and professional status. Data on types or varieties of stresses and stress factors was also collected using interviews. Since this study is

¹⁸ I don't think knowing these participants impacted the data collected partly because our relationship was casual. Still I was careful and relied on the advice and tactics suggested by McConnell-Henry et al. (2010) for interviewing people known to the researcher.

primarily concerned with how spouses cope and adjust, data on individual level strategies, practices, and activities of coping was also collected.

Before conducting each interview, I read the interview protocol to focus my questioning on the main issues. I also requested participants to sign the consent form (Cho et al. 2005) as a sign that they had agreed to be interviewed and for confirmation of confidentiality. All but one of the interviews took place in participants' homes. During interviews, I took field notes, and observed and recorded participants' nonverbal behavior (Bordoloi 2015). This data was important in interpreting and contextualizing findings. All participants were rewarded with a \$20 Walmart gift card from the Women and Giving grant as an incentive and appreciation for their time.

Sixteen interviews were conducted successfully. Closed-ended questions were used to capture data on attributes while open-ended questions were used to cover all topical issues on coping and adjustment. Each individual interview took approximately 90 minutes; interpreter-aided interviews took approximately 150 minutes. Of the 16 interviews conducted, four involved interpreters. Two of the participants that requested interpreters surprisingly spoke better English than some participants that spoke for themselves. This shows that some SIS just lack confidence to speak in their non-native languages.

Face-to-face interviews were used because they allow "synchronous communication and identifying social cues, such as voice, intonation, and body language" (Opdenakker 2006:3). This contextual information on feelings and knowledge can be added to verbal responses and can help in understanding more about participants (Patton 1990). According to Merriam (1998), qualitative research allows the researcher to conduct a more in-depth exploration of participants' experiences by collecting thick, rich data through interviews, observations, the collection of artifacts, or other forms of data collection.

Challenges Faced During Interviews

While conducting interviews I encountered numerous challenges including: interpreters putting their views ahead of those of the participants; interference from third parties particularly family members; and noise from children. Despite clarifying their roles (Murray and Wynne 2001), some interpreters did not follow the instructions I gave them. Others put their views ahead of those of participants (Reuband 1992), or took a more active part in the interview than required. Furthermore interpreters and participants engaged in conversations I felt were not related to the subject of the interviews. Given the cultural sensitivity of the research, sometimes it was difficult for me to restrain them. In the end some interviews took longer than anticipated.

According to Murray and Wynne (2001:166), interpreters should translate participants' narratives as exactly told. However, during the interview some would just tell me what they thought participants were likely to say instead of posing the questions as I had stated them, and sticking to participants' answers. To avoid bias and threats to validity I posed the same question in a different way or asked interpreters to ask the same question to see if they would give me a similar answer.

Another challenge was interference by third parties, like husbands, in-laws, and friends. In some cases, noise from children, and participants' constant movements to check on children interfered with interviews. Interference by third parties is more common for interviews conducted in homes rather than those conducted in public or formal settings (Low 2012). In one incident, a husband of a participant came into the living room where the interview was being conducted, and engaged in a parallel conversation with his wife. Because of her husband's involvement, I felt that her responses were biased.

According to Reuband (1992), some spouses attend interviews so as to be in control of the situation; others might hang around to avert the potential of interviewers making them look

bad (Boeije 2004). This is not far-fetched as some SIS blame their husbands for their present circumstances. Besides, it might be culturally or socially unbecoming to ask a husband or a family member to vacate a room because of an interview. Zipp and Toth (2002) observed that the presence of third parties during interviews is a common occurrence even in western societies.

However, the presence of third parties can impact negatively on the quality of interviews, and perhaps responses. This impact became clear to me when a mother in-law and a friend entered the room where I was interviewing a participant. The participant became uncomfortable especially when I asked personal questions (Murray and Wynne 2001). I realized that the participant was torn between telling her mother in-law to go out of the room or to continue the interview. Her voice changed. I feared this could bias her responses. To make matters worse, her mother in-law kept responding to the questions directed to the interviewee by the interpreter. This kind of interference was highlighted by Smith (1997). Boeije (2004) stated that third parties threaten the validity of findings. All in all, there was more third party interference during interviews with participants whose English skills (Low 2012) were low than those with better skills.

As mentioned above, there was noise from children playing and, sometimes, communicating with their mothers. However, given that most participants had young families, this was expected. But unlike adult third-parties, children were not interested in the interviews (Reuband 1992). Therefore, other than distracting their mothers occasionally, this did not pose a significant challenge to the interviews.

To avoid conflicts and biased responses due to third parties, I asked interpreters to ignore responses from third parties. I also cancelled two interviews, one with a participant from Egypt who kept consulting her husband after he had come into the interview room, and another one from a participant from Saudi Arabia.

Ethical Issues and IRB Approval

Before conducting interviews, I completed certification for conducting research with human subjects. I also applied to the University's IRB committee and had my research approved. I took the following measures to protect research participants: I used pseudonyms instead of real names and avoided any references to participants' residential addresses or telephone contacts. These personal data were kept in a password protected file on my computer, and reserved only for purposes of contacting participants in case I needed to. I also explained to participants the benefits and the likely dangers of participating in the study, and assured them of confidentiality of their information and of their identities.

Data Processing and Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data involves a process of moving back and forth between materials being analyzed, the theory, and different analytical perspectives adopted by the researcher (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011; Creswell 2007; Babbie 2004). This research followed the same procedure with the aim of making sense or meaning out of the data.

There were two types of data to analyze: quantitative data covering background characteristics of the sample, and qualitative data on the main themes of the research. Data on variables like age, duration of stay in the United States, family size, and professional status was analyzed descriptively using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). Data was summarized using frequency distributions.

The purpose of deriving the above descriptive measures was twofold: to describe the sample, and to use the description as a basis for discussing themes derived from analysis of qualitative data on coping and adjustment. In addition to knowing what activities or practices SIS were engaged in, it was vital to know their nationalities, professional backgrounds, and family

sizes. It was assumed that SIS from different nationalities/cultural backgrounds might rely on different activities to cope and adjust. Similarly, it was assumed that SIS of different educational backgrounds or family sizes might cope differently.

Analysis of qualitative data starts when a researcher goes to the field to collect data, while coding is part of data collection (Hesse Biber et al. 2011). Hence it is an on-going process, which, as stated above, requires moving back and forth with the data. Despite this, it is important to describe how some key procedures like transcription were accomplished.

Interviews were conducted by the researcher and hired interpreters. I transcribed eight interviews, while interpreters transcribed those they helped me conduct. All transcription was verbatim (Hesse-Biber et al. 2011). However, I later edited the transcripts to make sure they were free of grammatical mistakes, and read them carefully to ensure that I understood the data well (Hesse-Biber et al. 2011).

While reading transcripts, I took note of broad issues from the literature review related to the research questions like “activities,” and “strategies,” and specific theoretical codes such as “separation,” “integration,” and “coping.” I also highlighted other words, phrases and terms I thought captured key issues or were just interesting to explore further. Some of these were later used during “formal” coding. To develop a coding frame (Weston et al. 2001), I initially coded two interviews, one for a respondent from Asia, and the other one from Africa. I also chose these interviews to check whether there were any regional differences or similarities in responses as earlier assumed. Afterwards, I applied the codes in the coding frame to large chunks of data like

paragraphs (Saldana 2013). Two levels of coding, open¹⁹ and axial coding²⁰ (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Kendall 1999; Lounsbury 2014) were applied.²¹

In open coding, I applied theoretical codes mentioned above, and emergent codes like “identity conflicts,” “family growth,” “intimacy,” “unemployment,” food preparation,” and “access to food.” Coding large sections of data preserves the context (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Next I undertook axial coding whereby I tried to make connections between categories (as instructed by Strauss and Corbin 1990). According to Miles et al. (2014), second cycle coding has four functions: “condensing data into smaller analytical units, helping the researcher elaborate a cognitive map, laying ground for cross-case analysis, and getting the researcher into data analysis during data collection” (p.86). As far as this research is concerned, second cycle coding was used to condense data.

In reality, coding is cyclical (Lounsbury 2014). I kept moving between open and axial codes to ensure large sections of data had been coded well, and/or placed in proper categories. Axial coding progressed into identification, naming and description of themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). However, I gave priority to themes that articulated the research questions (Gibbs 2007; Lounsbury 2014) like “stages of adjustment,” “adjustment to host environment,” “factors facilitating coping and adjustment,” “strategies for coping and adjustment,” and “positive aspects/experiences of coping and adjustment,” and “challenges of coping and adjustment.” According to Braun and Clarke (2006:79) thematic analysis is “a method for identifying,

¹⁹ Strauss and Corbin (1990) define open coding as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (p. 61).

²⁰ According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) axial coding is “a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. This is done by using a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies, and consequences” (p. 96).

²¹ Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) refer to these processes as first and second cycle coding.

analyzing and reporting themes and patterns within data.” Thematic analysis was the main technique used to analyze the data (Braun and Clarke 2006; Boyatzis 1998).

CHAPTER FIVE

ATTRIBUTES OF PARTICIPANTS, COPING, AND ADJUSTMENT

Introduction

This chapter discusses the relationship between participants' social, economic and cultural attributes, and coping and adjustment. It then delves into aspects of adjustment like stages of adjustment, acculturation to host environment (including participants' perception of the extent to which they have acculturated), and factors facilitating coping and adjustment. The social characteristics of participants described include age, level of education, English competency, work experience, field of expertise, and housing. Cultural attributes examined include religion, nationality, and native language.

Finally, the economic characteristics investigated are sources of income and level of income; the section of economic attributes also discusses briefly access to social services, like SNAP, Medicaid, and subsidized housing. This chapter lays the foundation for subsequent chapters which describe and explain the strategies and activities of coping and adjustment, and experiences of coping and adjustment.

The first section of this chapter focuses on the social, economic, and cultural attributes of participants. Next is a discussion on stages of adjustment, followed by participants' views about their acculturation to Brookings (host community). This section includes a sub-section that describes participants' assessment of their mode²² of acculturation or extent to which they have acculturated. This section is important because it links the findings in this chapter to Berry's

²² "Mode of acculturation" actually refers to Berry's (2006) "strategies" of acculturation. Mode of acculturation is used to avoid confusing strategies of coping and adjustment used by participants, and Berry's theoretical conceptions of acculturation.

theory of acculturation on which this research is based. The last section describes factors facilitating coping and adjustment, including: interaction with members of the host community; access to social services; access to information; and sources of information.

Social, Economic and Cultural Attributes of Participants

Social-demographic Attributes. The social and demographic attributes of participants have a bearing on their coping and adjustment. These attributes include age, duration of stay in Brookings, place of abode before coming to Brookings, level of education, area of expertise, work experience, English competency, family size, and living conditions, including quality of housing. It was assumed that the longer participants had stayed in Brookings, the more they would have adjusted to living there. It was also assumed that participants who had lived in the United States prior to coming to Brookings would have less trouble acculturating to life in Brookings than those who came from other countries.

Other assumptions were made in regard to level of education: the higher a participants' competency in English, the easier her coping and adjustment would be expected to be. Finally, given that participants spend most of the time at home, it was assumed that their living conditions, notably quality of housing, might ease or complicate their coping and adjustment. Specifically, if it was assessed by participants to be of poorer quality than the housing they were living in before coming to Brookings, coping and adjustment would be more stressful. Although they were not made explicit, these assumptions stem from Berry's (1997) acculturative framework. They are concerned with articulating moderating factors prior to and during acculturation. Hence, they guide the findings discussed below.

Age. In regard to age, 11 (68.75%) of the participants were between twenty and thirty years, while 3 (18.75%) were above thirty one. Two (12.5%) of the participants declined to reveal their age. Of the sixteen participants, 13 (81.25%) had families ranging between two to

four members; 3 (18.75%) had families of between five and seven individuals. This shows that participants had “normal” family sizes corresponding to the ideal American family (Hagewen and Morgan 2005).

Length of Stay. Nine (56.25%) of the participants had lived in Brookings for a period ranging from one to three years, while five (31.25%) had stayed for less than a year. Two (12.5%) participants had stayed for more than three years. Although studies that include length of stay in host country report varying findings depending on type of immigrant or acculturating group²³ as far as this study and type of immigrant group studied (SIS) are concerned, one year is considered sufficient for making reasonable conclusions about the effect of time on acculturation²⁴. In this case, eleven participants can be said to have stayed long enough to adjust. Eleven (68.75%) of participants came to Brookings directly from their home countries, 4 (25%) were living in the United States prior to arrival in Brookings, while one (6.25%) came from another country.

Education and Experience. According to Choi and Thomas (2009), one’s level of education positively influences attitudes toward acculturation. Therefore, I investigated participants’ level of education and fields of expertise. Four (25%) of the participants were graduates with masters degrees; 7 (43.75%) possessed bachelor degrees, while three (18.75%)

²³ Ouarasse and van de Vijver 2005 studied Moroccan immigrants in Netherlands and found that the average length of stay was 17.55 years (p.257); Miglietta and Tartaglia 2009 studied North Africans, Romanians and Latino Americans in Italy and found that the average length of stay for the groups was 5.54, 4.32, and 6.88 respectively.

²⁴ As non-immigrants with (theoretically) fixed period of stay in the United States (the longest being PhD students and their dependents who can stay for six years), it is pragmatic to argue that one year is sufficient for them to have acculturated. Otherwise given the short period of time they can stay in the United States compared to immigrants, it would be impossible to do research on acculturation of this group and make reasonable conclusions. Yet, there is an increasing amount of research on acculturation of students and their dependents.

had college diplomas.²⁵ An additional 2 (12.5%) had graduated from high school. Participants' fields of expertise included law, human resource management, project management, agronomy, education, medicine and surgery, business administration, finance, economics, business studies, and linguistics. Most participants had practiced in their fields for relatively few years before coming to Brookings. Three (18.75%) had work experience of less than one year; 4 (25%) had worked for a period ranging from one to three years, while 3 (18.75 %) had practiced for about four to 6 years. Finally, 3 (18.75%) had work experience of over six years. Despite having relatively short work experience, given their high levels of education, it is evident why some participants were stressed by being unemployed.

Table 5.1: Social and Cultural Attributes of Participants

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Age			Years lived in Brookings		
20-25	2	12.5	Less than 1 year	5	31.25
26-30	9	56.25	1-3	9	56.25
31-35	2	12.5	3-6	2	12.5
36-above	1	6.25			
Non-response	2	12.5			
N	16	100		16	100
Country of Prior Residence			Family Size		
Home	11	68.75	2-4	12	75
United States	4	25.0	5-7	4	25
Other country	1	6.25			
N	16	100		16	100
Religion			Level of education		
Hindu	7	43.75	High school	2	12.5
Islam	4	25.0	College	3	18.75
Christianity	4	25.0	Bachelor's degree	7	43.75
Other	1	6.25	Graduate degree	4	25
	16	100		16	100
Field of expertise			Work Experience		
Arts and humanities	7	43.75	Less than 1 year	3	18.75
Sciences	3	18.75	1-3 years	4	25.0
Business and finance	4	25.0	4-6 years	3	18.75
Non-response	2	12.5	More than 6 years	3	18.75

²⁵ This is the equivalent of two-year community college degrees.

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
			Non-response	3	18.75
	16	100		16	100
Region of Origin			Native Language		
Asia	9	56.25	Nepalese	6	37.5
Africa	5	31.25	Bangla	2	12.5
China	2	12.5	Chinese	2	12.5
N	16	100	Arabic	2	12.5
			Hindi	1	6.25
			French	1	6.25
			Twi	1	6.25
			Amhara	1	6.25
			N	16	100

English competency. To find out whether participants were competent in English, and, therefore could communicate well with members of the host community, I asked if they were comfortable communicating in English. Results showed that 11 (68.75%) participants were comfortable communicating in English, while 2 (12.5%) were not. Three participants (18.75%) said they could communicate in English but with some difficulties. However, when I asked participants to rate their English competency on a scale ranging from “low,” through “moderate” to “high,” 5 (31.25%) said it was low, 9 (56.25%) reported that it was moderate, and 2 (12.5%) said it was high. However, during interviews, I observed that some participants underestimated their skills; those who said their English was moderate were very competent. In contrast, those that had stated that it was high were in fact moderately competent.

Despite a positive assessment of their ability to communicate in English, two participants from Nepal said that every time they inquired about something in places like Walmart, people told them that they couldn’t hear them, and as a result they became frustrated.

I think it’s very high, I speak it but sometimes it does not come naturally. It’s a process of changing from my language to English (Lilian).

Yes, but sometimes I feel I cannot express what I want to say, and my kids keep saying ‘mum your English is not good’ (Christine).

Differences between participants' assessment of their ability to communicate in English, and rating of their competency could be attributed to both lack of confidence and over-confidence. As a result of being isolated, some SIS may doubt their English competence. On the other hand, others may exaggerate their abilities to appear knowledgeable.

Living Conditions. Living conditions, for instance quality of housing, were assumed to influence coping and adjustment. In regard to quality of housing, 12 (75%) participants reported that they were happy with their housing, while 4 (25%) were not. Those that were unhappy with their housing were living in the student family housing of the university. Some of the reasons given for not liking family housing included the small size of the apartments and bathrooms, location of toilets close to the kitchen, and lack of privacy owing to lack of locks on bedroom doors. These challenges were expressed with strong emotions as is evident in the words of Claire (India):

No. Not at all, not at all not! The kind of housing is not the best. Some times when we come from shopping in Walmart, I don't have space where I can put the stuff. At that time we both fight each other, and I say: "Why are we here, why are we here?" We are here in such a small house. I don't want to stay here. Send me back to my country.

On the other hand, eight of those that were renting off-campus were very satisfied with everything about their apartments. Lillian (Nepal) stated: "I like this apartment because it's spacious for two people and they give us free cable and internet."

According to Berry (1997), age, education and work experience are important moderating factors prior to acculturation. In line with the above assumptions concerning these factors, the following conclusions can be drawn: although SIS were highly educated, they had relatively little work experience. Despite this, they were having a hard time coping with being unemployed as affirmed by Amanda (Ghana):

Back home I was working as a professional teacher and at the same time taking care of the kids. Most of the time I used to plan and manage my time well. But here, because I don't have any work to do, most of the time as I was saying, you have to be in the house and that doesn't make me happy at all. Because am not used to staying in the house, it's a big challenge to me.

Length of stay, family size, living conditions and language competence are important during acculturation (Berry 1997). Most SIS in this study had stayed long enough to acculturate. Despite having good living conditions and being linguistically competent, coping and adjustment of SIS was hampered by lack of confidence to communicate in English. Lack of confidence was linked to having little interaction with members of the host community. Finally, SIS had small families, which should have eased their coping. However, as will be shown below, the real implications of this factor are best seen in conjunction with their economic situation.

Economic Attributes. Inadequate finances have been highlighted as one of the main challenges faced by international students and their families, and a key problem in coping (Huang and Klinger 2006) and adjustment. According to participants, family monthly incomes ranged from \$1000 to slightly above \$1,600. The main source of income was assistantships. Aside from “formal” sources of income, four participants reported that they sometimes get assistance from their parents. Furthermore, two said they supplemented assistantship earnings with savings at home. One respondent said she was getting money from her job in her country while another one had found a job on the internet translating books from Chinese to English. Despite mentioning these sources of income, participants did not state how much they contributed to household income.²⁶ (See Table 5.2 for summary of financial information.)

²⁶ I sensed that participants who stated they got money from home were uncomfortable discussing this issue for fear of being taxed.

Table 5.2: Sources of Income and Amount Earned

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Source of income	Assistantship	14	87.5
	Scholarships	2	12.5
	N	16	100
Other sources	Parental support	4	25.0
	Home savings	2	12.5
	Home country employment	1	6.25
	Part-time job	1	6.25
	Non-response	8	50
	N	16	100
Amount earned	1600-above	7	43.75
	1100-1500	4	25.0
	Non-response	5	31.25
	N	16	100

Due to the low income levels of participants, many depend on United States' government social services like WIC, SNAP, and Medicaid. Eleven (68.75%) of participants stated that they had access to WIC compared to 7 (43.75%) that received Medicaid, 6 (37.5%) SNAP, and 1 (6.25%) subsidized housing. Unlike WIC and subsidized housing²⁷, SNAP and Medicaid are accessible only to families with children born in the United States. Of all the social services mentioned above, WIC was the most accessed by participants' families, perhaps because of being accessible to anyone living in the United States legally.

A majority of participants 11 (68.75%) acknowledged that the above services were helpful. This was further supported by participants like Sarah (Libya) who stated: "WIC is very helpful because they cover some of the food expenses like milk, juice, and some vegetables." Carol (Nepal) also appreciated the services: "Yeah, yeah, they are very helpful because students

²⁷ Anyone with a social security number can access subsidized public housing.

earn little money so these services reduce our expenses. Actually, we use SNAP to buy most of our food.”

The most important factor that negatively influenced coping and adjustment of SIS was their financial circumstances, specifically, the small size of assistantships paid to their husbands. This factor was also identified by SIS as the most important negative stressor. However, limited finances become very important if put in context of SIS inability to work as a result of immigration regulations associated with F-2 visa.

Cultural Attributes. The cultural attributes of participants investigated include country of origin, native language, and religion. Participants hailed from three ‘continents’ namely, Asia, Africa, and China²⁸. Participants from Asia hailed from Nepal (6), Bangladesh (2) and India (1), while those from Africa were from Ghana (1), Ethiopia (1), Libya (2) and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (1). In addition to these, there were two participants from China. Participants spoke different native languages such as Nepalese, Chinese, Arabic, French, Twi, Hindi, Bangla, and Amharic. Participants’ religious beliefs were less varied than their native languages. Participants from Nepal and India were Hindus, those from Bangladesh and Libya were Muslims, while those from Ghana and Ethiopia were Christians. One respondent from China adopted Christianity when she came to the United States. The other was a non-believer.

According to the Berry’s (2006) acculturation framework, cultural distance is an important pre-acculturation factor. Immigrants whose cultures are distant from those of the West experience more difficulties acculturating in Western countries than those emigrating from

²⁸ For purposes of discussing cultural aspects of the sample, participants are categorized into three: those from Africa, Asia and China. China is separated from the rest of Asia because its culture is significantly different than that of countries like Nepal and Bangladesh which are, generally speaking, close culturally. As such, Nepal, India and Bangladesh are considered as Asia, while DRC, Ethiopia, Libya and Ghana are Africa.

Western countries. All SIS were from non-Western cultures and non-native English speakers. This explains why, despite having the ability to communicate in English, some lacked confidence and became stressed when people in the community failed to understand them. According to Joy (Nepal), “The other challenge I have is English language. I went to Walmart and asked for something but they didn’t understand me.” Sandra (Ethiopia) attributed language problems to lacking practice: “My English is not good because am always at home not communicating with other people. This makes it hard to improve because you don’t practice.”

Adjustment and Coping

This section discusses issues pertaining to adjustment and coping, including: stages of adjustment; participants’ perceptions of acculturation; aspects of the host environment, and; factors that facilitated coping and adjustment. In consideration with the social, economic and cultural attributes of these women, understanding their adjustment and coping process in this section provides a picture of the extent of participants’ cross-cultural adjustment.

Stages of adjustment. People go through different stages as they adjust to life in a new environment. Following Yeh (2001), I grouped responses to the question on the stage of adjustment into four stages of adjustment: honeymoon stage; exploratory stage; struggling stage; and settle-down stage²⁹. Ten (62.5%) out of sixteen participants reported that they were at the settle-down stage. During this stage, people report reduced stress and increased acceptance of their situation (Yeh 2001):

Yes the first two months when I had come were too hard for me and I was so frustrated. But now I have adjusted to this environment and am happy. I keep thinking that this is the life, this is the life I have to live. And every time I get a bad feeling about being on F-2 visa, I say ‘no, this is the life’. Carol (Nepal)

²⁹ Elsewhere, these stages are called “honey moon”, “culture shock”, “adjustment”, and “mastery,” and the theory under which they were proposed, the U-Curve theory or UCT (Black and Mendenhall 1990).

Four (25%) participants said that they were still struggling, while 10 (62.5%) said that they were excited for the first three months, but after realizing that their visas prohibited them from working, the weather was depressing, and they had to stay home all day, struggling set in. Five (31.25%) participants had language problems and their husbands were too busy to help them with their adjustment. Despite feeling stressed initially, the 10 participants mentioned earlier had moved beyond the struggling stage and were in the settle-down stage. One of these participants, Sandra (Ethiopia), observed:

When I had just come, the first three months were very difficult. Now things have changed. At first I would stay at home alone every day, but now I have a baby born here and so am very busy. I am now good.

Lastly, two (12.5%) participants reported that they were still exploring the situation because they were new. Joy (Nepal) said she was still in the honeymoon stage: “No. Am still learning the place because I have just come from home.” There was no participant in the exploratory stage. According to Yeh (2001:73), this stage involves “confronting fantasies with reality and overcoming problems.”

Acculturation to Host Environment: Integration. Berry (1994) argued that people adapting to new environments might rely on one of four strategies: integration; assimilation; separation; and marginalization. Only two of the above strategies, integration and separation, appear to have been pursued by participants. When people adapt aspects of the host culture and at the same time maintain their original culture, they are *integrating*. This research found that SIS were acculturating to various aspects of American culture like national holidays, language, dress code, and food, at the same time as they were holding onto to similar aspects of their home cultures.

In response to whether they were adopting American culture 7 out of 9 participants, including those from conservative cultures like Chinese, Muslim and Hindu, responded in the affirmative. For example, Muslims and Hindus, said they were observing Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter. In addition, they participated in Thanksgiving:

Actually even though we are far from our country, we are still bound to our culture. Whenever there is any cultural event, we remember to call home and engage with our families. But also coming here has made us associate with some aspects of US and other cultures. Although we are Nepalese, we are in America, and our children are American citizens. So we are trying to learn both cultures. We are learning American culture so that we can teach our children. So we are in both cultures. For example we celebrate some events like Christmas and Thanksgiving, and our Nepalese events. Carol (Nepal)

Four (25%) participants stated that they loved the American dress code and dressed like Americans. Like Carol, Maria (Bangladesh) expressed her family's dual cultural identity in the following way: "In my country there are some culture programs. We make them here and get together for the bigger occasions. We dress well, but also in American culture we do the same when they have their events. We enjoy the Christmas, Thanksgiving parties, everything. It's mixed." Although some participants had adopted aspects like dressing, others, particularly Muslims, maintained their dress code.

Most parents indicated that their children had adopted American culture, and they encouraged it because some of them were born in the United States. However, they also made sure they learned their own culture or didn't forget it. To instill cultural norms and values among children, children were taught things like language, how to greet, and foods. Rita (Nepal) had this to say in respect to the strategy of cultural integration:

I am raising them like both, so that they cannot forget our language. My oldest daughter speaks both languages, but she speaks Nepali with Nepalese. When she meets Americans, she speaks English so that she cannot forget our language. Some parents from Nepal, their children have already forgotten our native language and they speak English. I don't like that.

Some of the participants who said they were integrating also liked the independence of women in America, equality between men and women, and having respect for others. Lilian (Nepal) indicated that Nepalese society is patriarchal hence men dominate women in many aspects of life, including decision-making. Therefore she loved the gender equality prevalent in American society:

I want to see women independent. Here, women are treated equally as men, but back home it's like, you know, all they expect from women is to get married and have children. That is it. Then you are not expected to have a career. You know, all that kind of stuff. Indian and Nepali societies are like that...like I said, they are male-dominated.

This sentiment was echoed by Phiona (China) who said that women in her country lacked freedom and their parents were too involved in their lives. She said she preferred the independence enjoyed by American women:

But one thing I love about American culture is that their girls are kind of independent. In China because of the one child policy, our parents have to get involved in our lives so much. They push you to marry or get married and even push you to have children. I don't like that. That's why China is experiencing a lot of divorce rates. Parents force us to get married.

In respect to food, Pamela (China) stated: "I think we are adopting American culture. Yeah, we are trying to adapt to the flavor of American food. We try to love pizza, hamburgers and any other thing. But we still eat rice." Aspects of Chinese culture that Pamela and Phiona were maintaining include foods like rice, food preparation, for example, insuring food had a Chinese flavor, and dress code. Claire (India) also emphasized that her family was trying to adapt to American foods: "American food--I try but you know the taste is completely different. So like once in a month we test American food. Not for the whole month."

Participants from Ghana and Ethiopia noted that they were teaching their children both home and American culture norms concerning food. Amanda (Ghana) said: "I have not left my culture but rather I have learnt some aspects of American culture, for example foods. I have

adopted some of their culture.” Echoing Amanda, Jane from Congo stated: “I wanna keep my culture. It’s very important. I wanna keep it. My kids are gonna learn about American culture. Its fine, but I wanna teach them about my culture too. It’s very important to teach them both cultures.”

Capellini and Yen (2013:969) argued that “Sociological and marketing studies underline how food represents an everyday materialization of ethnic identity and as such food choices are resistant to change.” Therefore, an immigrant’s ability to overcome this “cultural resistance” by changing her food choices and consuming host food is a good measure of acculturation. To determine the extent to which SIS had acculturated (beyond the above findings about integration), this research investigated food preferences of SIS, access to food, food consumption, and preparation.

Seven (43.75%) of participants liked food from their countries, while 6 (37.5%) stated that they liked both local American food and food from their countries. Furthermore, 2 (12.5%) participants stated they liked any food, while 1 (6.25%) liked only American food. Families with children reported that children loved American food more than food from their countries. Therefore, they were forced to buy it. Christine (Nepal) stated: “The kids love American foods more than our traditional foods. They want things like pizza, macaroni cheese and pasta.” This shows that in contrast to my assumption that most participants liked their traditional foods, in fact a good number seems to be adjusting to American food. Some are partly being influenced by their children.

Participants were also asked if they had access to the foods they liked. Thirteen (81.25%) stated they had access to the foods they liked, as opposed to 2 (12.5%) that did not. Despite having access to the foods they liked, some stated that it was very costly. Among those with problems accessing the food they wanted were Muslims who eat a special kind of meat called *halal*, found in specific stores.

The main sources of food for participants were local stores in the community, namely Walmart and Hy-Vee, followed by international stores in the community and a near-by larger city. Fourteen (87.5%) of participants reported that they bought their food from these stores; 9 (56.25%) bought their food from international stores in Brookings, while 5 (31.25%) obtained it from stores in Brookings and Sioux Falls. Only 2 (12.5%) said they bought food exclusively from international stores in Sioux Falls; one (6.25%) bought her food from local stores in Sioux Falls or the farmers market in Brookings.

Three (18.75%) participants reported that their relatives send them food from their countries especially when someone is coming from there, or through the post office, and 2 (12.5%) said that they buy their food from online stores. Amanda (Ghana) noted: “We buy food from local grocery stores in [the community], Walmart, and [near-by city] African store, but they are expensive. But that’s the food I can eat and be satisfied. So I have to force my husband to buy it. Because I can’t eat fried potatoes all the time.”

In response to whether they prepared food at home or ate in restaurants, 14 (87.5%) of the participants reported that they prepared food at home, while 2 (12.5%) said that they ate at home and in restaurants. As noted above, most participants prepared their food rather than eat in restaurants because of low income. Others simply loved their traditional foods, which are not available in local restaurants.

In regard to whether they were able to prepare food the way they preferred or liked³⁰, fourteen (87.5%) of participants stated that they prepared their food the way they liked. However, 7 (43.75%) enhanced its taste by buying and using spices from their countries. As

³⁰ Based on my earlier experience as SIS, I reasoned that SIS may be experiencing challenges making traditional meals due to lacking ingredients they were accustomed to, cooking ware, or variety/mix of foods. Therefore, while this concerns preparation, it has a bearing on access.

noted above, slightly over 40% of participants loved their traditional foods more than American food. The types of traditional foods loved by participants were as varied as their countries (and perhaps ethnic groups).

Interestingly, though, almost all participants said they liked vegetables like spinach, collard greens, and cassava leaves. However, some noted that more meats than vegetables were available in local stores. Other popular foods among participants were rice and meat. According to Pamela (China): “Yes. But we Chinese love vegetables and there are many more meats here than vegetables. But we cook vegetables and we also cook some meats. Many people love different things. Like some love chicken and pork, and we also love different foods.” A variety of American foods including pizza, fast-food sandwiches, chicken, macaroni, and pasta were liked by participants.

Separation. According to Berry (1994), this is a strategy whereby an individual rejects the host culture and sticks to her cultural identity. Two (12.5%) participants from Asia appeared to have adapted this strategy. One said that she didn’t want to adopt American culture and didn’t want her children to do so either. Another one said she didn’t want to participate in any local activities to avoid her child adopting American culture. Clare (India) observed: “No, no. I love my culture, and am not adopting American culture. If you are saying by wearing clothes, these dresses are free. But, in our culture, we wear *Saris* to cover all the body.”

Out of five participants from Africa, two said they were pursuing Berry’s strategy of separation. Dora (Libya) said, “I am in my culture and am not adopting American culture.” Despite resisting American culture, Sarah (Libya) said her family was eating American food, and dressed like Americans: “We eat only French fries³¹. About dress code when I go out I dress like

³¹ This is really not American food, however, it appears that because of being new to the US, and probably not having eaten this food in her country, this participant took it for granted that it is American food.

a Libyan and Muslim. But if I see anything and like it, I buy it and wear it at home. In our culture you cannot wear short things, but in the house you can.” This might sound contradictory but it’s not difficult to imagine given the conflicts and competition between Western culture, religions, and Islam (Saroglou and Mathijssen 2007). Dwyer (2000) observed that South-Asian Muslim girls’ dress code was monitored by close family and extended “community” to maintain religious purity: “‘English clothes’ were inevitably associated with rebelliousness and active sexuality and therefore a threat to ethnic or religious ‘purity’” (p.478).

Some of the reasons why participants were not adopting American culture include certain cultural practices like allowing children to sleep-over at their friends’ houses, getting involved in relationships at a tender age, having sex before marriage, and staying away from home after turning eighteen. Christine (Nepal) voiced her disagreement about children leaving their parents’ home:

Another thing is that in our culture, you stay with your parents until you get married... Here when you are 17 and 18 you move out of your parents’ house. I don’t think it will be easy for me. I still want my culture. But if the university they are in is out of town, then they have to. But living with friends when they are in town where we live, I don’t want that culture.

Anna (Bangladesh) disapproved of early sexual relationships among children that are allegedly common in American culture: “We are Muslim. We obey our husbands and respect them. But here, it’s a mess. And here, having sex is normal for teenage boys and girls without marriage. But our culture doesn’t allow this. That’s why I don’t want my child to adopt that type of culture.”

As far as stages of adjustment, the above findings illustrate that SIS had adjusted. Ten (62.5%) SIS were in the final stage of adjustment--settle-down stage--as conceptualized by Yeh (2001). Similarly, the fact that 11 (68.75%) participants stated they had adopted Berry’s mode of acculturation called integration shows that SIS had adjusted to the local community. However,

these findings need to be viewed cautiously. Other issues investigated in this research, for example experiences of SIS, indicate that they were still struggling to cope and adjust.

Factors Facilitating Coping and Adjustment

In line with Berry's (2006) acculturation framework, factors facilitating coping and adjustment may be categorized into those that happen during acculturation, and those that matter prior to acculturation. Pre-departure factors included decision making, motivations and expectations. The most important pre-departure factors were motivation to support husbands to complete their degrees and joint decision-making. On the other hand, knowledge of the community, social support, access to community services, sources of information on community services, and interaction with co-nationals and international friends were the main post-departure (during) factors that facilitated acculturation.

Pre-departure Factors: Decision to come to the United States. It has been reported that husbands make decisions to move and their wives have no say in those decisions (Zhang et al. 2011). As a result they experience difficulties coping and adjusting. Results from this study indicate that 6 (37.5%) of spouses made joint decisions to come to United States; 1 (6.25%) of the SIS made the decision herself. Even 4 (25%) who admitted that their husbands made the decision acknowledged that they were also interested in coming, which shows that, in general, spouses agreed to move to the United States as a family.

Carol (Nepal) reported that: "Both of us wanted to come. And me I just came so that I can support my husband. That's our major decision." In contrast, Christine (Nepal) said: "It was my decision I think. He had a very good job but I didn't know that I would not be able to do anything at that time. I didn't feel the way I am feeling now. So it was my idea. I knew that we would both get opportunities to study and work in United States." Despite the challenges

experienced by most participants, these results explain why some have managed to cope and adjust, or are coping and adjusting to life in Brookings.

Motivations and Expectations. Research indicates that motivation is positively related with adjustment (Chen et al. 2010), and pre-departure expectations affect adjustment (Martin, Bradford and Rohlich 1995). Eight (50%) of the participants reported that the decision to come to the United States was motivated by the need to support their husbands and being together as a family. For example Sarah (Libya) stated: “I came prepared to be a house wife. I knew I was not going to work, so I came prepared to meet all challenges of being on F-2 visa. I just came to support my husband so that he can study.” Similarly, responding to a question whose decision it was to come to the United States, Lilian (Nepal) highlighted the need for her to support her husband: “It was both our decision. He had to finish his PhD, so staying home wouldn’t have made it possible, you know. So we both decided to come so that he can finish his PhD.”

Being self-motivated, producing children, and keeping in touch with family members, facilitated adjustment. Accepting the situation they were in (i.e. F-2 Visa status) was, according to Dora (Libya), among the factors that motivated participants: “Having friends and knowing that there is nothing I can do about the situation...More so having children that keep me busy.”

Most participants expected that every part of the United States was urbanized. They expected to find cities as big as San Francisco, Chicago, and New York, where you find everything. Images of highly urbanized cities are projected through movies. Unfortunately, such movies never show rural America of which the local community is a part. Moreover, most participants came from larger cities, and hence were shocked to find themselves in a small town. Phiona (China) observed:

I watched the American TV before I came and I had American friends in Beijing. So we used to talk about American culture a lot and everything in America. But when I came

here, I was surprised because it's a small city. However I love this place because it's too quiet and peaceful. More to that there is no jam like it used to be in Beijing.

Joy (Nepal) also shared what she thought America looked like: "We were really excited that it's amazing, but in reality things are very different. I expected a bigger city. I expected to work after one month but I can't find anything." Despite being disappointed by the size of the community, many participants were happy that it is quiet, safe, and has no traffic jams.

Fourteen (87.5%) SIS expected to find opportunities to work, study, and experience living in a different place. However, after reaching here, they found out that because of F-2 visa restrictions, it was hard for them to work or join school. Furthermore, some participants believed that life in United States would be better and easier than in their countries, but have realized that it is harder to live in this community. Maria (Bangladesh) lamented thus:

It was my fantasy to come to America. But [here]!!!! I can't tell. It is a very boring city and there is nothing much. Before I came I thought Oh...there are many opportunities for me. Doing everything. But my husband told me that because you are a doctor, you have to study here and if you want to make money you have to study here more time. But there is also no part time jobs for us, nothing for F-2 visa. There is nothing for me. But before I came, I knew I would find lots of work and job opportunities. Everyone wishes it.

In contrast to Maria and others who expected to work, go back to school or have fun, 4 (25%) participants said their husbands had shared with them the reality about life in the local community. Therefore they came without high expectations other than staying with their husbands and supporting them to accomplish their goals. As a result, they experienced less stress than those who expected to achieve more. However, half of the participants expected things like beautiful scenery, good weather, and freedom to do whatever they wanted. But as discussed above, these participants found everything totally different than they expected.

All in all, 12 (75%) participants reported that their expectations had not been met. Despite this, nine (56.25%) had not made any adjustments in their expectations. In contrast, two participants stated that when their expectations were not met they chose to have babies; others reported they had opted to improve their English language skills. Furthermore, a few others stated that they planned to move from Brookings to bigger cities when their husbands completed school. This is because they hoped that bigger cities would offer them opportunities to work, even if illegally.

Only four (25%) participants said that their expectations had partly been met. For those whose expectations were met, things like being able to support to their husbands; living together as a family; and children being in school and getting free and quality education were important.

Post-Departure Factors: Knowledge of the Community. Cross-cultural adjustment requires knowledge about the host culture, therefore receiving information about the host culture (which Caligiuri and Lazarova 2002 termed “informational support”) is very vital. Informational support “reduces uncertainty and confusion [and] helps clarify the situation and provides feedback regarding the appropriate behaviors and, in turn, helps... develop sensitivity toward the host culture” (Caligiuri and Lazarova 2002:768). When participants were asked if they were conversant with the local community, 8 (50%) reported that they knew the area while 8 (50%) said they did not. Of the 8 participants with knowledge about the local community, 5 (62.5%) said that their husbands were the main source of information; 2 (25%) stated that they learned from international friends, while 1 (12.5%) relied on the internet.

Of the 8 (50%) who said that they didn’t know Brookings, 3 (37.5%) reported that their husbands were busy, so they had no one to show them around; 3 (37.5%) said they had nowhere to leave their children, while 2 (25%) reported that the community was too small so there was nothing to learn (save a few significant places like Walmart, Hy-Vee, and the Children’s Museum

which they already knew.) Christine (Nepal) observed: “Like whatever I need I know. Like grocery stores where I need to go, the library and wherever I need to go, I know and am comfortable with that.”

Lack of knowledge of the local community was also attributed to not knowing how to drive. Nine of the participants did not know how to drive. This means that for them to venture anywhere, their husbands or friends must be available to drive them. But as noted above, husbands and friends are very busy with school or work, hence participants’ immobility and consequently lack of knowledge and difficulties in adjustment.

Social Support. Many participants reported that friends, particularly those from the international community and their home countries, facilitated their adjustment. Besides being a source of information, and driving participants around Brookings, friends from the international community organized parties, festivals (e.g. Nepal Night), and meetings where they meet and share meals and talk about their challenges:

Yes. They have been so helpful. Like when I gave birth, some friends from Bangladesh cooked food and brought it to me. They told me that I should let them know in case I needed help. But first of all, my husband has been very supportive, then the Nepalese community and international student community. Carol (Nepal)

Similarly, Sandra (Ethiopia) observed: “Yes I do share with some of my friends because all my friends have F-2 visa. So we are always talking about these issues. Yes, and we hope that this thing will change and we will feel relieved.” Friends helped Jane (Congo) learn about social services in the community:

For example for the hospital, a friend of mine just told me about it. When I was pregnant, she just told us that I need to go to Avera family hospital. ‘They can help you even if you don’t have insurance. They can help you. You can pay less even when you don’t have insurance.’

Husbands are a vital source of social support as observed in respect to sharing information about the community. Husbands were the main source of information because most of them came earlier than their spouses, hence were already knowledgeable. Claire (India) stated that her husband gained knowledge from those he found: “My husband came in January 2013, and then I followed him three months later. So when he came here, he contacted his friends and they told him about places like JCPenny, Dollar Tree, Indian Store and others.”

Besides sharing information about the local community, husbands offered emotional and psychological support to their spouses by encouraging them, which keeps them strong and helps them to adjust. Carol (Nepal) stated that: “My husband is very supportive. After spending here two to three months, I told him that we have to go back to Nepal since I can’t do anything in the USA. I was so frustrated at the time but my husband supported me by talking to me.”

Access to Community Services. Participants were asked if they knew any program(s) in the community or at the university targeting women holding F-2 visas. Ten participants reported that there were two programs, ESL classes, and US Friends’ Conversation, hosted by the University Lutheran Center. In addition to ESL and US Conversations classes, three participants also talked about knitting classes and yoga. These programs are organized especially for spouses having difficulties with English language. However, two participants from Nepal who had just come to Brookings, two Chinese, and one respondent from Libya were not aware of these programs. Of the ten participants who knew about the programs, two said they had no interest in them³². Amanda (Ghana) observed: “Yes. Like the English class, am aware but am not interested at all. I have also heard that there are crafts, like vocational work, and knitting, but I don’t have any interest in that.”

³² They both sounded as if they felt the programs were inferior.

SIS were aware that SDSU had a gym. However, it was not specifically targeted at them. Six (37.5%) of the participants reported that they could not afford to pay the membership fee in order to access the gym. Hence it was of no importance to them. Rita (Nepal) one of the dissatisfied SIS, lamented:

Like gym? I don't go to any program! I don't know any. Many girls told me they go for yoga and gym classes, but I don't go because all time I take care of my baby. And it's very expensive! In gym, yes I hear the first time you pay 70 or 80 dollars. But how can I afford this? Because I don't have pocket money. And my husband's salary is not so good. It's all to spend. Not so high. So I can't afford this. I want, but I can't afford. That's why.

Five participants that talked about ESL classes and US Conversation had abandoned them because of child-care responsibilities. These programs do not provide child care services to enable mums to attend classes. Despite these weaknesses, beneficiaries of the programs credited them for being effective and instrumental in their coping and adjustment.

Sources of Information about Community Services. Twelve (75%) of participants noted that they got information about services like hospitals and stores in the community from their husbands and friends, as noted above. Other sources of information included the internet, television, Facebook and international students' associations. International students' associations created Facebook pages where information is posted. Some participants obtained information from multiple sources. Rita (Nepal) noted: "Like what is going on, sometimes I find it on Facebook. Sometimes my friends call me that this and that is happening here. Like that. But sometimes I see them on TV while watching TV like that." Dora (Libya) also got information from multiple sources: "I find information from my husband and from Facebook. We have a Facebook page for the Arab community. So when there is something new, they post it there so that everybody knows."

Carol (Nepal) observed that because of being confined to the house, the above sources of information are quick and valuable: “When there is anything new, they usually communicate through Nepal students association and this helps us in finding information. How else can we find information when we are always in the house?”

Interaction with Co-Nationals and International People in Brookings. Findings about relationships with members of the host community were a bit contradictory. Thirteen (81.25%) of the participants reported having friends from the local community. However, very few of these friends were Americans. Those with American friends had met them in ESL classes. Some of the problems cited for not having American friends include the language barrier, not being in school, and being confined at home. According to Phiona (China): “I don’t have American friends. In my country I had so many friends from different places, but here I can’t make friends because I don’t go to school.” However, Rita (Nepal) observed: “Yes I have American friends but not many. They are like one or two American friends. On my husband’s side, there are some Nepalese and Indian friends.” The frustration of staying at home and having few friends was further emphasized by Sarah (Libya): “I am always in the house and I have very few friends. So, I don’t know. And I have been here for few months. But I feel comfortable with smaller groups.” Therefore, friends in the local community were most often fellow international students and their families and international residents or professionals working in Brookings.

Fifteen (93.75%) participants had friends among international students and professionals. Of these, 10 (66.6%) had been friends for a period ranging from one to three years, while 1 (6.6%) had been friends for less than a year. Despite being friends with international students and professionals, their frequency of interaction was low. While 2 (12.5%) of all participants said they always met with their friends, and 8 (50%) met sometimes, 5 (31.25%) said they rarely met. Infrequent interaction was attributed to busy schedules as observed by Claire: “Yeah, sometimes we meet for a tea party and we gossip with each other, just by chatting. Because they are students

they are always busy with assignments. They usually don't have much time to come and talk with us."

Participants interacted with their friends in different places and via different methods. Cissy (Nepal) said that families organized potlucks and small parties where they engaged in some activities: "My house . . . we meet with my Nepalese friends and do threading every day, every day after lunch." Similarly, Anne (Bangladesh) observed: "Sometimes I make a program in my home and we call it 'one dish party.' I invite all my friends and we eat, watch a movie, and pass time. I also Skype with my family, and when I feel so lonely I call them." A few participants interacted with their friends via other electronic media like Facebook and Viber.

Many participants reported that members of the local community were generally supportive and hospitable. Hospitality of members of the host community was described using terms such as, "friendly," "good," "kind," "helpful," "loving," "nice," and "welcoming." Pamela (China) had this to say: "I think people in [the local community] are all friendly. Like when I go to the supermarket and ask something, they are willing to help. I think they are all friendly." Echoing this sentiment, Amanda (Ghana) noted: "Oh yes. I feel welcome, especially because of the church we are in now. They are so lovely, and they are so kind." Similarly, Lilian (Nepal) asserted that people in the local community are helpful:

Yeah, it's welcoming. John and Samantha have helped us a lot. Like to come here, we did not have an apartment. We had booked but you know as soon as we landed we didn't have a place to live. So we spent a night at the hotel, then John and Samantha helped us move to this apartment, get a car and things like that. So they helped us to move. They have been helpful. I was surprised because Nepalese people are not that helpful. But these American people were so helpful.

Participants from countries like Nepal and Bangladesh, with large numbers of people living in the community, noted that their national communities had greatly helped them to acculturate. For example, Carol (Nepal) said:

I think [the local] community is very good. Being international people, living [here] is very good. One of the best things ... is the community. And there are many Nepalese, so that also makes it good for me because we have many friends. So we Nepalese can't say that we are so lonely in this community because we are many and we know each other.

And, Claire (India) added:

Friends from the community are very good. Sometimes we make get together parties. That makes me feel good and less frustrated. But sometimes I tell my friends that 'nowadays am feeling frustrated because there is nothing for me to do here. All the time I stay in bed, stay in bed.' You know, it's kind of...when you keep in bed, it's like you are a patient.

All in all, results show that in general the local community is hospitable. Despite this, having few American friends or none at all appeared to bother participants as it kept recurring in many conversations. According to Berry's (2006), acculturation framework, social support and attitudes of the host society are important factors during acculturation. Obtaining information about the host community is one of the most important forms of social support that immigrants can receive. The above results show that half of the participants were knowledgeable about the host community, hence were adjusting better than the half that were not.

Findings also show that despite infrequent interaction between SIS and co-national and international friends, these friends and husbands were the main sources of information about the host community. Although Ward and Rana-Deuba (2000) observed that it is not the quantity but quality of networks that matters in provision of social support or dealing with loneliness (Sawir et al. 2008), the results show that infrequent interaction may affect amount of information. Other constraining factors may include immobility or limited mobility (as was the case with Muslim SIS). Together, these factors may affect coping and adjustment negatively.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the social, cultural, and economic attributes of participants like age; family size; level of education; duration of stay in Brookings; work experience; quality of

living conditions; level of income; language; and religion that influenced coping and adjustment of SIS. It also discussed the extent to which participants had adjusted, aspects of the host community they had adjusted to, and factors that facilitated coping and adjustment. Low incomes, and language barriers negatively affected participants' coping and adjustment. Most participants were well educated, however they lacked opportunities for work. Coupled with unmet expectations, being dependent and unproductive, these factors resulted into stress, hence difficulties with coping and adjustment.

Despite the above, results show that most participants were actually coping and adjusting well to life in Brookings. The majority were integrating, which, according to Berry's four strategies of acculturation, means that they were adapting aspects of the host culture and maintaining their own culture. Key aspects of the host community participants were coping with and adjusting to include weather and food. Results on coping and adjustment to food are important because research on international students' cross-cultural adjustment has neglected this issue. Participants stated that they cope with the poor taste of American food by buying and using spices from their countries. They also obtain food from their countries from international stores. Despite this, a good number were adjusting to American food like pizza and hamburgers.

Social factors like having social support from husbands and friends, access to community services and government social services, and interaction with co-nationals and international friends also facilitated coping and adjustment. Coping and adjustment were further made possible by individual factors like joint decision making (particularly the decision to come to the United States), motivation to support husbands to pursue educational goals, and being self-motivated to accept and endure the conditions and restrictions of F-2 visa. As explained above, most of the above factors, for instance, social support, decision making and motivation are captured in Berry's (2006) acculturation framework. Although I have pointed out the most

important factors involved in coping and adjusting of SIS, it would be wrong to draw conclusions without considering the full implications of findings in the remaining chapters.

CHAPTER SIX

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES OF COPING AND ADJUSTMENT

Introduction

This chapter describes strategies and activities of coping and adjustment. Three strategies were discerned from the data, three of which--pursuing further education, supporting husbands, and growing families--cut across cultural backgrounds. The fourth, entrepreneurship, varied by cultural background. Furthermore, four broad activities were identified and grouped under the following headings: interactional; enhancing skills; domestic chores and health; and leisure/recreation. Interactional activities included use of electronics and social media, participation in religious activities, and social gatherings. Enhancing skills involved improving English language competence and/or learning how to make handcrafts. Domestic chores and health activities included: cooking; child care; and public health and hygiene. Finally, a variety of leisure/recreational activities were undertaken by participants.

Coping strategies are one of the factors that occur during the process of acculturation and that moderate acculturative effects (Berry 1997; Figure 3.2, Chapter Three). The relationship between strategies and activities is that in order to implement strategies, certain activities need to be undertaken. However, from the findings of this research, it appears that every strategy is not automatically followed by an activity, or that there must be an activity for every strategy. The reason may be that ordinary people like SIS do not always pursue their lives following pre-determined scripts or conscious planning. Many times people are not aware that that by doing something (activity), they are pursuing a given strategy.

Despite this, activities like cooking, child care, and maintaining hygiene were associated with the strategy of supporting husbands. By fulfilling these roles, SIS freed their husbands to pursue their education. Execution of the above domestic chores, particularly, child care

responsibilities like taking children to school, public library, and museums, was also instrumental for the strategy of growing families. Furthermore, pursuing further education is related with activities for enhancing skills like taking ESL classes to improve English language competence. Finally, entrepreneurship was implemented by one SIS from China through translating books from English to Chinese and selling them online; other SIS simply contemplated engaging in some entrepreneurial activities but never did so. The following discussion describes strategies; the next section describes the activities. It is followed by the conclusion.

Strategies of Coping and Adjustment

I initially planned to investigate activities, strategies, and tactics of coping and adjustment. But because some participants, especially those with poor English, had difficulties distinguishing between activities and tactics (even when I tried explaining the differences) the findings discussed below focus on activities and strategies. Despite coming from different cultural backgrounds, some participants had devised three similar strategies namely, pursuing further education, supporting husbands, and growing families. However, the fourth strategy, entrepreneurship, varied with cultural background.

Pursuing Further Education. Seven (43.75%) participants from Asia and Africa reported that they were in the process of pursuing further studies. Jane (Congo) had already started preparing by reading for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) test. Three had consulted with different Heads of Departments to establish if they qualified to be admitted at the university; the rest (three) had inquired about assistantships. Among those who had done such consultations, one reported how disappointed she had been to learn that despite qualifying for admission, she would not be offered an assistantship. In view of the financial difficulties discussed earlier, this respondent failed to embark on her studies. Despite this setback, the respondent said she would not give up her dream.

Anne (Bangladesh), a medical doctor by profession, said that her strategy was to go back to school and do a master's degree in a different field because practicing medicine in America would require her to go back to medical school. Amanda (Ghana) also planned on going back to school but was being held back by child care responsibilities: "I have planned to continue with my education only if we are here. But in case I go back to home, I would continue doing my work. But now because of the kids...I can't leave the kids because it would be too tough to manage them."

Participants from China were also keen on pursuing further studies, however, one of them reported that the university did not offer the course she was interested in. Given language differences between China and the United States, Pamela (China) was worried about whether she could compete favorably with native English speakers. Language problems were also noted by both participants from Libya, who stated that their strategy was to use the time on F-2 visa to learn English. Although none of the participants was successful in transitioning to F-1 status, this strategy was important in the sense that while they struggled, they had something to work towards and hope for.

Supporting Husband. Five (31.25%) participants stated that their main plan was to support their husbands to be successful in their academic programs. It was also the main reason why they had come to the United States. Supporting husbands involved doing all household chores to free them for their academic work, and taking care of all child care responsibilities. Claire (India) remarked: "So am giving him support so that he can concentrate on his school work. I take care of other things, like house work, taking care of my baby, laundry... everything. I work all day long. I have no extra time for myself." Participants from Africa and China also stated that being here with their husbands was the best contribution they could make to their careers.

Growing Family. Two participants from Asia and one from Africa indicated that they decided to have children because they would keep them busy. Other reasons that motivated this decision include inability to work (due to F-2 visa restrictions), and inability, or delays, in going back to school. The experience of Carol (Nepal) provides a good example of the choice to have children:

I had decided to make the time more fruitful by going back to school, so when the plan failed I decided to have a baby so that it can keep me busy. Now I have a baby and most of the time am engaged. Anyway, you have to make your time fruitful. Without doing that life [here] becomes very hard when you are on F-2 visa. I still plan to go back to school but not right now.

In response to whether she would not have had babies if she was working, Sandra (Ethiopia) said: “No. If I had a job I would have had one baby but not two.” This confirms Carol’s observation about having babies to avoid being redundant. Given their husbands’ busy schedules, participants also decided to dedicate their time to supporting their children’s education. A respondent from Asia said that she takes her children to the public library, reads for them, and guides them. Two participants from Africa were also pursuing the same strategy.

Entrepreneurship. This strategy was highlighted by two participants from Nepal and China. Christine (Nepal) talked about finding means of being financially independent by starting a small business:

Like what can you do as an F-2 Visa spouse? I think you can do a small business here. I heard about it but am not very sure where to start from. Sometimes I feel I should do that then I will be like, you know, financially independent. He doesn’t need to worry about the financial things. He is studying. That’s the thing. But now I know that I can’t work because I need a different visa to do that.

A close examination of Christine’s thought reveals that it appears to be stemming from frustration, rather than a realistic assessment of her situation, particularly her visa status.

Of all participants whose strategies have so far been documented, Phiona (China) had the most fascinating strategy. Before she came to Brookings, she searched the internet to find out what she could do during her spare time. As luck might have it, she found a website which led her to an online job for translating books from English to Chinese. According to her, apart from keeping her busy, this job is also a source of income, though small. Phiona's strategy was to perfect her translating skills in preparation to offer a course related to this field. This is how she devised her strategy:

So from China I had already planned what I was going to do here. I found a Chinese website called EYAN and I think originally it's from Germany. I think it is a golden book project, so you can publish books. Aaah..... and it's like they don't have the edition because it's like the writer wrote it like 15years ago. So you need to buy the edition and then you translate and sell it on the internet. Sometimes you get a really good job and sometimes it's like it has a good sale.

Activities for Acculturating and Respondent's Cultural Backgrounds

According to the ABC (affect, behavior, and cognition) model (Yue and Lee 2012), people are said to be adjusting if they are involved in cultural learning. Cultural learning means that a person or a group of people are socially interacting, they have ability to communicate, have knowledge about the host community, or are seeking knowledge about the host culture. Participants tried to acculturate by undertaking different activities. Their activities can be grouped into four subthemes: interactional activities; skill enhancing activities; domestic chores; and leisure/recreational activities.

Interactional Activities. Activities under this subtheme include those based on electronic and social media like Skyping, ‘Facebooking,’ and watching movies, and religious and social gatherings. Religious activities include bible study and prayer groups, while social gatherings involve preparing meals.

All participants engaged in some form of electronic or social media-related activity. Most participants from Asia reported that they were engaged in Skyping, ‘Facebooking,’ and watching movies. Joy (Nepal) observed: “I Skype with my friends and they encourage me. I also use Facebook. At least sometimes I watch movies and this helps me relax my mind when am stressed.” Two participants from China also Skyped and used Facebook to keep in touch with family and friends.

Although electronic and social media-related activities also helped participants from Africa to cope with stress, some activities they participated in, like listening to Christian music or phoning friends, were slightly different than those of participants from Asia. According to Amanda (Ghana):

Oh! Yeah... especially when we used to meet our friends during the weekends for bible study, going to church. Sometimes it makes me relax. And sometimes talking to friends on the phone, some friends are too lovely. Sometimes they will even call you and ask how you are.

Given their popularity it can be said that electronic and social media-related activities were very important for coping and adjustment, particularly in dealing with stressful factors like loneliness. This is because they were sources of social and emotional support. Sarah (Libya) highlighted the importance telephoning plays for her: “I talk to my mother every day and tell her how I feel. Every time I talk to her, I cry because I miss her. But later I feel better.” Internet use also supported other activities, like crocheting as stated by Dora (Libya): “I use YouTube to find lessons related to crocheting....”

The most cited activities for coping and adjusting among African participants were religious activities. Three participants from Africa were Christians and two were Muslims. There were variations in religious activities of Christians and Muslims from all countries apart from those from Bangladesh who did not engage in any religious activities. The main activities that helped Muslims cope with loneliness included regular meetings at the mosque or in homes, praying together (during meetings), sharing meals, and interacting.

Commenting about these activities, Dora (Libya) observed: “Another activity is about our religion. We usually have social gatherings like once or twice a month where we meet and share a meal, and pray together at the mosque. This helps us to get out of the house and not to remain lonely. We call it ‘big-girl event’.” Christians reported that they were involved in women’s bible study, prayer meetings, Sunday services, and social gatherings. According to them, these activities enabled them to cope and adjust to life in in the community by interacting with other people. However, most of them said they meet with people from their countries, which limits the number of people with whom they interact.

Phiona (China) had embraced Christianity, while her country woman Pamela had maintained her Chinese religious heritage. Since coming to the United States, Phiona had been influenced by her Chinese friends to become a Christian. As such, she was involved in activities similar to those of African participants like social gatherings, attending church services, bible study, and preparing meals at the church. According to her, these activities helped her to interact with different people and make friends: “They have bible study and I sometimes go there like once a week. Every Friday we have a social gathering at church where we eat together. I also go there on Fridays and help them to cook.”

As observed above, Muslim participants from Bangladesh and Hindus were not involved in any religious activities. According to Hindus, this is because there are no Hindu temples in Brookings. Maria (Bangladesh) said that only her husband went to the mosque for prayers.

Although they were not involved in religious activities, participants from Bangladesh said that they organized social gatherings. According to Anne (Bangladesh):

Yeah. We have lots of Bangladesh people... we are about Aahh... 44 or 49 from Bangladesh. Some times when we get bored, like this season, we ladies in family housing plan something. We meet together and we make some small party to enjoy. I, Maria, Noha, and other ladies cook one item per person and then we get together, eat and have fun. This reduces our stress as F-2 visa spouses.

Anne observed that she did not participate in many activities besides social gatherings for cultural reasons; specifically, she wanted to protect her child from American culture:

I don't engage in some activities because I don't want my child to adopt American culture. Because our Bangladesh women, we as family, we love our family... We are Muslim. We obey our husbands and respect them. But here it's mess. And here boys and girls in teenage age having sex before marriage is normal. But in our culture we don't allow this. That's why I want my child not to adopt this culture. That's why I have to care for her and that's why I don't want to engage in other activities. I have to take care of her.

Although not directly linked to any strategy, interactional activities were very important for coping among SIS because they dealt effectively with two of their main problems--loneliness and lack of adequate social support. Through skyping, telephoning and face-booking, SIS were able to mobilize social and emotional support from friends and family; religious activities were also very important for coping with loneliness because they enabled SIS to interact with other people and make friends (although mostly in their cultural groups). Hence, by stabilizing emotions of SIS and giving them some comfort and a sense of belonging, interactional activities indirectly supported most of the strategies.

Enhancing Skills. Five participants took classes to enhance their English language competencies, while others engaged in handcraft, for example, crocheting and knitting. Other than crocheting, the above activities are the only ones that were organized by the university.

Three participants from Asia were taking English classes to enhance their English proficiency. These classes are provided through two programs, ESL and US friends, and take place at the University Lutheran center. Participants meet twice a week, and each session lasts two hours. Participants attending these classes, especially those from Nepal, credited them for improving their English, enhancing their communication skills and confidence, and making friends including a few Americans. According to Joy (Nepal): “I go for ESL classes for two days and sometimes I go for knitting classes. Other times I go to my friend’s house. But ESL classes are good. They have helped me improve my English.” In view of the importance attached to the classes, it is no surprise that Dora (Libya) who did not take them lamented: “But I would love to participate in the English class because it would help me be able to communicate with other people, and even make friends.”

Participants like Dora that had failed to attend these classes blamed it on lack of finances to pay for day care, lack of baby sitters, pregnancy and child birth, lack of information about the classes, and limited number of days in a week the classes were offered³³. These problems were highlighted by Rita (Nepal): “Yes. There are English classes two days per week. I used to go there before I got pregnant. Now I have a baby I can’t go there. I can’t go there because I don’t have time, and no one to take care of my baby.” As a result, most participants recommended that the university should offer day care services so as to enable mothers to attend the classes. The ability to communicate with members of the host community is instrumental for cross cultural adjustment (Liu and Gallois 2014)³⁴ hence programs such as the ones discussed above need to be emphasized.

³³ These classes were offered twice a week. Two participants from Africa had dropped out of the classes due to pregnancy and child birth.

³⁴ Liu and Gallois observed that communication “[i]s the means through which people exert influence on others and are, in turn, influenced by others” (p.3).

Other forms of classes were also engaged in by the participants. Six participants from Asia and Africa were involved in handcraft-related activities like knitting and crocheting. None of the participants from China was involved in these activities. These activities are organized privately in participants' homes, or participants meet at the house of their colleague and learn from each other. Alternatively they attend knitting classes organized by the university at the University Lutheran Center. These activities keep the women busy. They also enable them to interact and make friends, hence overcoming boredom. However, as for ESL classes, child care responsibilities hinder effective participation in these activities.

The above activities were beneficial for SIS in many ways. ESL classes were appreciated for improving English language competence of SIS, communication skills, and confidence. They also gave SIS an opportunity to make friends. Besides imparting practical skills of knitting and crocheting, these activities were important ways of interacting with other SIS, thereby overcoming loneliness. As mentioned above, some SIS that were interested in pursuing further studies took ESL classes to improve their English. Despite challenges faced by SIS in realizing this strategy (which were unrelated to English competence), some had prepared themselves well through this activity.

Domestic Chores and Health. Domestic chores include cooking, child care, and hygiene, while public health activities include cleaning the local community. As stated above, by undertaking almost all domestic chores, SIS enabled their husbands to concentrate on their studies. Hence these activities were effective in helping SIS achieve the strategy of supporting husbands and family.

Two participants reported that they loved cooking. Dora (Libya) said that before she came to Brookings she didn't know how to cook, but she now did because of having lots of time to learn. She stated that trying out different recipes helped to keep her busy. Similarly, Pamela (China) spent most of her time looking for new recipes and trying them out.

Participants from Africa said that they were always busy with kids and kids' programs like Head Start, Head-Start Early Childhood Program³⁵ and PEARL program³⁶. Amanda (Ghana) who participated in all the above programs described them as follows:

Yes. Oh, I used to engage in Head Start Early Child Program every week for my little kids. They used to come to the house for some lessons every week. They shout, and that engages you as a mother. Sometimes they have a program called PEARLS. They have it outside your home, may be twice every month, and that too engages me if I have time to attend.

Despite having children, participants from Asia did not mention any "official" activities related to children's education that they were involved in. Participants from China didn't have children, hence would not have been involved in any of the above programs.

All participants stated that they maintained hygiene in their homes. This is not a surprise given that they were all stay-home mums. Participants from Nepal also took part in a volunteer program organized by the Nepalese Students Association to clean the City of Brookings. This activity is carried out every Friday. Carol (Nepal) reported that: "because we are so many Nepalese students, we have association and we help to clean the city by picking dirt around roadside." Maintaining hygiene at home keeps participants busy, while cleaning the city offers Nepalese SIS an opportunity to meet and interact with members of the host community, thereby helping them to cope with loneliness.

Apart from one respondent from Asia who said she went to the gym, others were unable because of lacking finances. Similarly no respondent from Africa used the gym. Lillian (Nepal) described financial difficulties in the following way: "No we have to pay. You have to pay minimum of membership of three months which is 97 dollars. Forty dollars is registration for

³⁵ This is a program for children below 3 years whereby teachers come home and read to the children.

³⁶ PEARL allows parents to go and monitor what their children are learning.

new members and the rest would be monthly.” In contrast, both participants from China used the gym frequently.

Leisure/Recreational Activities. Twelve (75%) of the participants said that they spend leisure time in their homes. In contrast 2 (12.5%) spent it at home and other places. Leisure activities included watching movies and news, surfing the internet, visiting friends, boat riding, going to the gym, shopping, and reading books and novels. Seven (43.75%) of the participants reported that they had been on vacation or had visited other places in the United States. Although this represents over half of the participants, the fact that 4 (25%) had not visited any other place in the United States, nor been on vacation, highlights the financial needs of international students’ families.

Both participants from China, one specializing in Japanese linguistics, and the other in translation, were excited about their leisure activities. Pamela stated: “I spend most of my time at home reading books. I told you I major in Japanese linguistics. So I spend most of the time reading Japanese, Chinese, or English books.” According to these participants, travelling offers them an opportunity to see and learn about other places, and interact with other people. Participants who had visited other places in the U.S. had different views about the country than the image conveyed by the majority. For example, Maria (Bangladesh) stated: “Yeah. We went to Rapid City, Vermilion and Iowa State, and the places were good. Rapid City is too beautiful, and this summer we are planning to go to Houston and Las Vegas.”

All in all, the activities most effective in coping and adjustment were those related with enhancing skills and social interaction. Skyping and Facebook were highlighted by participants from China. The rest were emphasized by participants from Asia and Africa. Jane from Congo reported that:

Yes, when I came I wasn’t able to speak English, but am now able to speak it. I can speak a little bit although I know am not so good. I can speak and listen. Before I went there I couldn’t speak or listen. So when I started going to Lutheran Center, it helped me

a lot. Regarding Conversation class, for the first time I only wanted to listen. Oh my God!! It was very hard. But every day I was doing better and better. Now I can listen and speak.

Dora (Libya) stated that religious activities and handcraft were instrumental for coping with life in Brookings: “Meeting with other people during religious activities helps me get relieved when am bored, while crocheting keeps me busy in the house.” ESL and knitting classes helped participants interact with people from different cultures, learn English, and other skills. Carol (Nepal) noted: “The ESL class--because we learn a lot of things there, and we meet people of different cultures. This has helped me to learn about other people’s culture.”

Other effective activities mentioned by participants include reading, watching movies and child care. According to Amanda (Ghana), child care helped her cope with stress: “Yes. It’s not easy. If it wasn’t because of my kids, I would be very, very sad. But because of the children, you become busy every day. With children you are always moving up and down.” Together, the above activities were instrumental and effective in implementing strategies like supporting husband and family, and preparing SIS to pursue further education. Although not directly linked to any of the strategies discussed above, leisure/recreational, and interactional skills were also very important in coping with challenges like loneliness, and lack of adequate social and emotional support.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed strategies and described activities for coping and adjustment. Three strategies (pursuing further education, supporting husband and growing families), which were pursued by participants from all cultures (nationalities), and one strategy (documenting experiences and entrepreneurship) unique to participants from China and Asia were discussed. The first three strategies appeared to be dependent on each other. Despite, or in addition to

supporting their husbands, some SIS were interested in achieving further education. However, after failing to get assistantships, some opted to have babies.

Entrepreneurship was suggested by two participants from Asia and China but not by those from Africa. The idea to engage in entrepreneurial activities stemmed from the hardships imposed on families as a result of restrictions of the F-2 visa specifically not working or seeking employment, and pursuing formal education. However, it reveals that SIS lack knowledge of the restrictions on working or of the legal implications of earning income, notably being fined or facing the possibility of deportation.

Interactional activities and activities aimed at enhancing skills were the most effective for coping and adjusting. Not only were they instrumental in achieving strategies of supporting husbands and pursuing further education, both were a means of mobilizing social support, making friends, and reducing boredom and loneliness. Perhaps SIS might have been in a better position to pursue their strategies through the above activities had it not been for financial difficulties. Lack of finances was cited in the failure of some participants attending skill-enhancing activities like ESL and knitting classes because of an inability to pay for daycare or baby sitters. In contrast, although child birth and pregnancy were necessary for the strategy of growing families, they also caused some participants to drop from ESL classes. Hence, family responsibilities, financial difficulties, and F-2 visa restrictions were significant challenges to coping and adjustment.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EXPERIENCES OF COPING AND ADJUSTMENT

Introduction

This chapter discusses participants' experiences of coping and adjustment. It is divided into two main sections, one describing positive perceptions of F-2 Visa experiences, and the other, negative aspects. Positive experiences of coping and adjusting to life in the community include: family growth and intimacy; access to public services, particularly those enjoyed by children; acquisition of skills and knowledge; and personal development and independence. In contrast, challenges of coping and adjustment or negative experiences were perceived in terms of stressors. Five broad categories of stressors/problems were identified: economic circumstances of participants; issues in local context; cultural issues; relationships between spouses; and personal circumstances. These challenges are dealt with in the second section of this chapter. The first section describes the positive experiences of coping and adjustment.

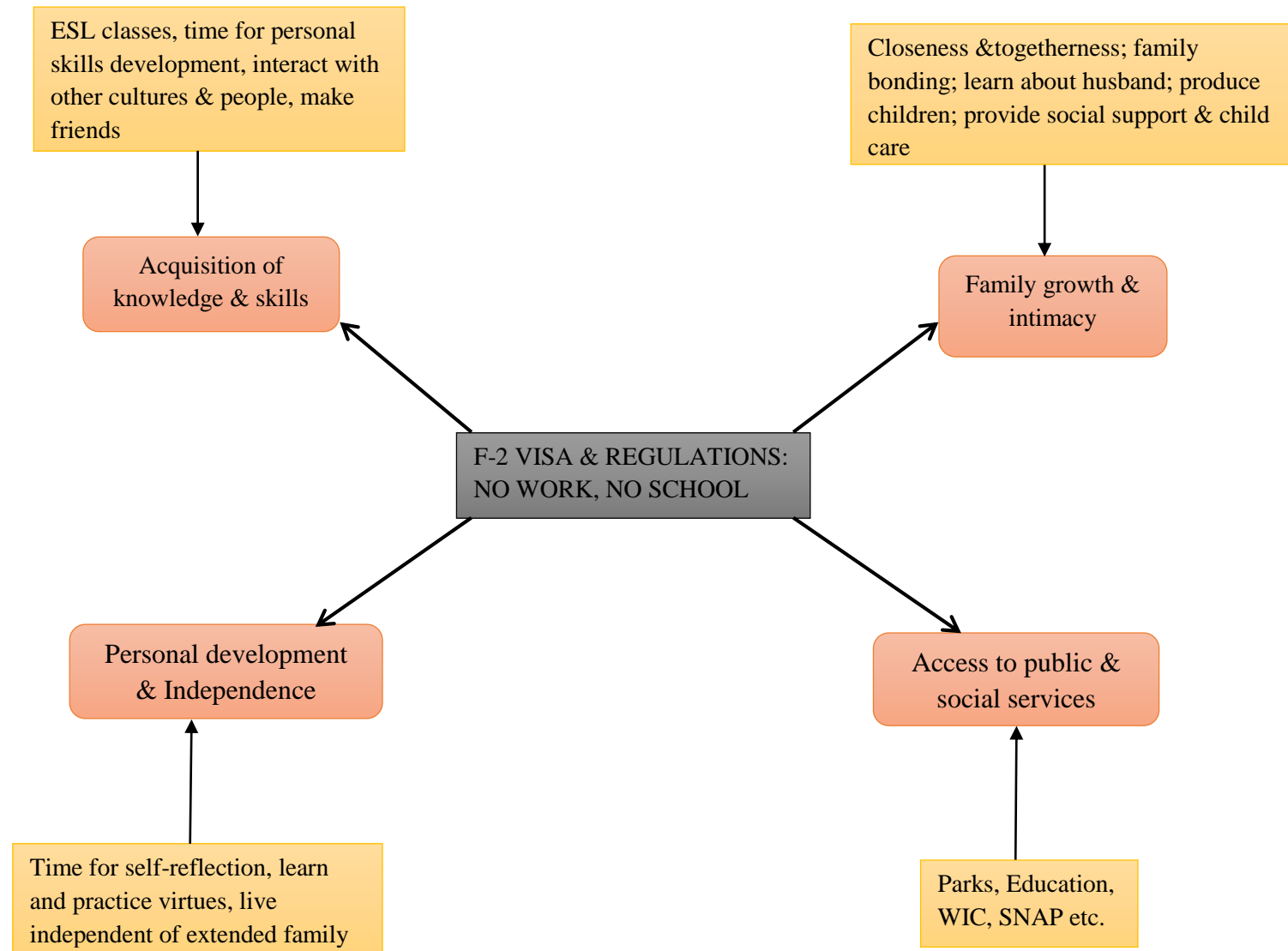
Positive Aspects of Coping and Adjustment

Despite perceiving their situation as challenging and frustrating, participants also highlighted some positive experiences and aspects such as family growth; intimacy; independence; learning new skills; knowledge; personal development; having enough time for child-care; and availability of public services like parks. Availability of public services, particularly those targeting children was an important subtheme.

These experiences are shaped by the F-2 visa as depicted in figure 7.1 below. Specifically, regulations prohibiting SIS from working and pursuing formal education lead to redundancy, loneliness, and low income (due to unemployment). As a result SIS have lots of time to visit parks, engage in self-reflection, bond with family and provide social support to their husbands. They also have time for developing personal skills and interact with other cultures.

Ultimately this results in personal development and independence, family growth and intimacy, accessing public and social services, and acquiring knowledge and skills. The F-2 visa and its regulations (not working and not pursuing formal schooling) are illustrated in the dark-shaded rectangle at the center of figure 7.1. The arrows that flow from it point to the themes, illustrated by the oval shaped-rectangles. Finally, the elements of the themes are depicted in the rectangles shaded cream.

Figure 7.1: Positive Experiences of Coping and Adjustment



Family growth and Intimacy. Five participants from Asia and two from Africa, perceived their situation as an opportunity to be closer to their husbands and children. Lilian from Nepal stated that back home they spent less time with their husbands and children because of living with their extended families. But since coming to the United States, they live alone in apartments and have ample opportunity to learn more about their spouses and children and develop intimacy.

This sentiment was highlighted by Dora (Libya):

Back home we live with our husbands' families. So you never get a chance to have time with your husband alone. But here I got a chance to learn more about my husband, interact with him, and get to know more about my children because I spend a lot of time with them.

Five participants said that to reduce loneliness, they decided to produce children and take care of them and their spouses. This decision was also influenced by lacking gainful employment, and being less busy than they had been in their countries. Amanda (Ghana) acknowledged thus:

As for that one it is okay because am not working. So I have enough time to look after the kids very well. I have also been able to have more babies. That's one of the advantages of staying at home. So you have enough time for the kids. When they are back from school and when they are going somewhere, you have enough time for them.

Jane from Congo echoed the same sentiment in the following words:

I have learnt a lot because back home I was not home most of the time. But it's too different here because am always in the house. So I know how to take care of everything--my kids, and my family. Back home I had a helper who was doing all the housework for me.

Besides growing more intimate with their husbands and children, three participants also stated that their F-2 visa status gave them an opportunity to support their husbands while they struggled to finish their degrees. Sarah (Libya) said she was happy being here with the husband and supporting him, whereas Christine (Nepal) said: "My family was there and I was working.

My career was there in one way, but the other way is that am helping my husband to pursue his career and have a good life after that. So it's both....you know..."

Access to Public Services. Participants from Asia perceived their stay in Brookings positively because of the public services they had access to, like public parks where children could play and free and good education. They were also excited about their children learning in English and interacting with children from different cultures.³⁷ Having free and good education was emphasized by four participants who felt relieved from the high cost of education in their countries. Learning English and exposure to other cultures was also emphasized by participants who felt that this would increase their children's future opportunities.

Acquisition of Skills and Knowledge. Two participants, one from Libya and another one from China, reported that the F-2 visa status gave them an opportunity to learn new things. Phiona said she uses free time to do her online job of translating books from Chinese to English, and to develop this skill. Talking about her on-line job, she observed: "So, the fact that I want to be a translator and writer, I always want to be quiet and think about myself. Being on F-2 visa is a good time and I have a lot of time for me to think about it, and also to do my favorite things." Dora (Libya) said that she uses her free time to improve her cooking. Five (31.25%) participants that had attended ESL classes noted that they had learnt some aspects of American culture, like English, which they would not have acquired if they had not come to the United States.

Learning English gave them an opportunity to interact with people from different cultures, and to participate in social activities like festivals. According to Carol (Nepal), ESL classes exposed her to many things: "Yeah, as we go to ESL classes, we learn different things

³⁷ Some participants from Bangladesh and Nepal were worried about their children being exposed to "negative" aspects of American culture like moving out of their parents' homes at an early age, and having sexual relationships before marriage.

because we meet different people from different countries. So you learn new things from different cultures. That's one thing that I have learned--different cultures.”

Personal Development and Independence. Phiona (China) said that she uses her free time to think about her career and what she loves doing, while Dora (Libya) said that by coming to the United States she had learnt to live independently: “I have learnt to be away from my family and manage my time by finding things to keep me busy.” Furthermore, Dora asserted that because there was nothing she could do about her immigration status, she had learned to be patient, supportive of her family, and hopeful: “It is hard to be on F-2 visa. I have learned to be patient. The good thing with being on F-2 visa is that am able to have children and look after them well.” Hence, personal development involved learning virtues participants had not possessed or that had been dormant prior to coming to the United States.

The above positive experiences were important in coping of SIS because in various ways: family growth and intimacy, and personal development and independence gave them a sense of self and purpose; family intimacy also helped them build close relationships that proved important for family stability. At the same time, it gave SIS determination to deal with the challenges of F-2 visa like isolation and loneliness, and being unemployed and redundant. Access to public services was important in coping and adjustment of SIS because it gave them the opportunity to venture outdoors, interact with other people, hence overcoming loneliness, and, above all, it was an opportunity for them to get involved in their children's learning and acculturation.

Challenges of Coping and Adjustment

Based on existing literature (Zhang et al. 2011; Cho et al. 2005; Sawir et al. 2008; Baba and Hosada 2014; Teshome 2010; Bordoloi 2015; Teshome and Osei-Kofi 2012), it was assumed that the processes and experiences of coping and adjustment of female spouses of international

students would be associated with numerous stressors. Participants perceived stressors as challenges.

The challenges faced by participants are divided into five sub-themes. Economic problems are discussed under two headings, inadequate finances, and unemployment. Challenges in the local context include lack of public transport, bad weather, and lack of access to information. In regard to social and emotional support, the main challenges were lack of adequate spousal social support and loneliness. Cultural issues were encompassed in difficulties in child rearing and feeding and food-related problems. Finally, personal issues highlighted by participants included limited career opportunities and unrealistic expectations. The above challenges are summarized in the table below, and will be discussed in the order in which they are presented.

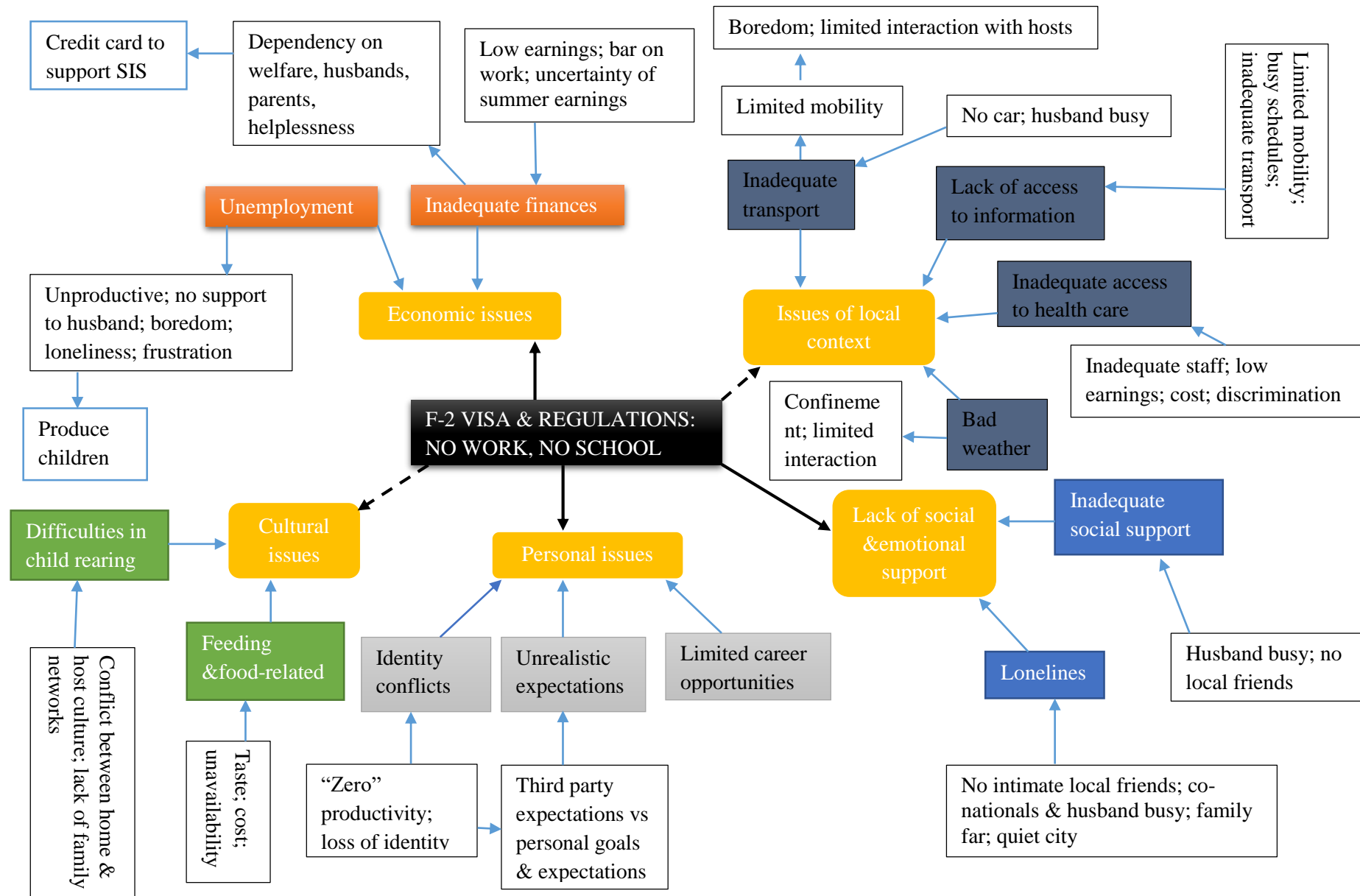
Table: 7.1: Main Challenges Faced by Participants

Challenge	Sub-themes
Economic	Inadequate finances Unemployment
Problems in Local context	Inadequate means of transportation Bad weather Lack of access to information Inadequate access to health care
Social and emotional support	Inadequate social support Loneliness
Cultural issues	Difficulties in child rearing Feeding and food-related issues
Personal issues	Limited career opportunities Unrealistic expectations Identity conflicts

Before discussing the above challenges, it is important to note that like positive experiences, most of them (apart from cultural issues and issues of local context) are centered on the F-2 visa and its regulations. In fact, barring SIS from seeking employment and pursuing further studies has more negative, complex, and far-reaching effects than positive influences on

their experiences. For example, personal issues like limited career opportunities, unrealistic expectations and identity conflicts stem directly from inability to work and pursue further studies. Because most SIS (13, 81.25%) were employed before their sojourn, redundancy leads to feelings of unproductiveness, loss of identity and identity conflicts. As a result of loss of identity, third parties like family members and friends interfere with the goals and expectations of SIS by trying to impose on them new expectations like childbearing. Barring SIS from working and studying makes them redundant, keeps them indoors, and thereby limits their career opportunities (see figure 7.2 below):

Figure 7.2: Negative Experiences of Coping and Adjustment/Stressors



Economic problems: Financial Challenges. Save for Phiona (China)³⁸, all participants stated that they experienced financial strain. The main cause of financial strain was low income as a result of small assistantships, coupled with conditions of the F-2 visa that restrict spouses from working. Even for those with scholarships from their governments, the stipends were not enough to cover school and living costs. According to participants, these assistantships only cover rent, food, and car loans, leaving barely enough for other needs (see Table 7.2). Many participants lamented that they and their husbands had left good jobs in their countries to come to the United States to pursue higher education, but were unable to fend for their families. Many said that it was painful for them to fail to support themselves, despite being highly educated and able bodied.

Table 7.2: Source(s) and Amount of Monthly Income for Spouses' Families

Financial Aspect		Frequency	Percent
Source of income	Assistantship	14	87.5
	Scholarship	2	12.5
	N	16	100
Amount of income	\$1,100-1500	4	25
	\$1,600-above	7	43.75
	Non-response	5	31.25
	N	16	100

Owing to the few sources of income and small amounts earned from them, 5 (31.25%) participants stated that their families' livelihoods were supplemented by resources from their parents, savings accrued from their former jobs³⁹ and government's welfare services like WIC

³⁸ Phiona had an internet job from which she earned some money making her less financially dependent on her husband than other spouses. Besides, she also had savings from home and she doesn't have children, hence spends less compared to participants with families.

³⁹ Such participants had been given study leave by institutions they worked for before coming to the United States. Some continued being paid half-salaries.

and SNAP. Despite this, some participants stated that they felt helpless to see all the financial burden fall on their husbands' shoulders. According to Jane (Congo):

Yeah, we have some financial problems because my husband is just a student. We don't have a lot of money to take care of everything. And, me, I can't work, so...I can't help him in anyway. We just use everything when he gets the money. We just have to use everything. So we can't keep some... We are feeling troubled without money. By end of the month we are completely broke.

As if having few sources of income and earning very little from them was not bad enough, some participants stated that summer assistantships were uncertain. Given the size of assistantships, they also worried whether their husbands would be able to pay tuition, let alone meet all the family's monthly expenditures. Christine (Nepal) lamented:

If you are not getting assistantship, how can you survive? Sometimes you have nine months assistantship and you don't have for three months. And, am always like, 'let's go back because I cannot work.' Sometimes I feel really helpless. Am able to help him but because of the visa status, am not able

Judging from Christine and other participants' statements, many were unhappy about being financially dependent on their husbands. These participants complained about lacking pocket money to buy personal effects like clothing and toys for their children. They loathed begging for money from their spouses to buy these necessities, while knowing that they too didn't have enough. This made them feel completely dependent and disempowered as conveyed by Anne (Bangladesh):

We can't do anything without money. We girls have some choice to new dress but we can't buy them because we don't have some pocket money. My husband's salary is not so good. We spend all of it in our home. We spend it on house rent, car rent, and others essentials. So they can't afford to give us some pocket money.

Despite having many financial burdens, two participants reported that their husbands gave them credit and debit cards to make them financially independent. According to Sandra

(Ethiopia): “Because I had a job in our country so he is feeling that am always at home so I need to enjoy anything I want. He provides if I need anything. He gave me visa-credit card and if I want to buy anything I use it.”

Unemployment. Besides small assistantships, most economic problems highlighted by participants were a direct outcome of strict immigration policies that prevented them from working. According to 15 (93.75%) of participants, being unemployed led to being unproductive, which led to other problems like failure to support their husbands, to look after families, pay health insurance, boredom, loneliness, and frustration. Almost all participants (13, 81.25%) were employed before coming to the United States, but, owing to visa restrictions, they had become housewives. As a result they experienced a lot of boredom and frustration. Commenting about this Christine (Nepal) stated: “Life on F-2 visa is so challenging because even if you are educated, you have to be inside the house and that is really suffocating. Sometimes I really feel like going out and do something but that’s not possible because of my visa status.”

To cope with these challenges, 6 (37.5%) of the participants decided to have babies to keep them occupied. Cissy (Nepal) said: “I was feeling very lonely. No work. Husband so busy. I had no baby but after later I had a little one and felt so busy. But she now goes to school and am feeling lonely already. So, we planned to have baby number two so that she can keep me busy.” The above shows that the inability to work or redundancy, rather than desire to produce children in the United States,⁴⁰ is a major factor driving women on F-2 visa to have babies. Redundancy is a major stumbling block to coping and adjusting quickly.

⁴⁰ A growing amount of literature e.g. see Rivera (2014) discusses “birth-tourism” and “anchor babies”, concepts which refer to children born of immigrant parents seeking to take advantage of their children becoming US citizens by virtue of being born in the United States.

Problems in the Local Context: Inadequate Public Transport. Public transport in the local community is limited⁴¹. For international students whose income is too low to buy, let alone maintain, more than one car, mobility is a challenge. All participants said they had one car. As a result, participants' movements have to coincide with those of their husbands, and if they were busy, this forced participants to remain indoors. Six (37.5%) of the participants emphasized that inadequate transportation was a big problem. According to Sarah:

It's boring staying at home. Before I came here I was in Denver, Colorado. I was in a big city, so I could go out with the kids. I was busy, but here, I have nothing to do. In Denver, we had public transport like trains and buses. So I used them a lot. But here, there is no transportation and no shopping malls. So you have to remain in the house.

In order for anyone to adjust, she must know the environment she lives in, and must be able to interact with the host community. Since public transport in Brookings is limited and participants have little access to private means, they end up being confined at home and have difficulties of coping and adjusting.

Bad Weather. Aside from inadequate means of transportation, all participants complained about the weather in Brookings, particularly coldness. They noted that they always found it so hard to go outside the house to take a walk, or to do any other activity. Coupled with financial problems, bad weather made these participants fear to venture far from their homes lest they endangered themselves and their children. Hence they were unable to explore the environment they live in. Problems with weather stem partly from the fact that most participants hailed from countries with warmer climates. Carol (Nepal) stated:

Yeah, weather is one of the challenges that I have faced in this country. In Nepal it's not as cold as here. And in Nepal I was free to move out but when I came here, I was afraid

⁴¹ In Brookings, there is only one type of public transport--the Brookings Area Transport Agency (BATA) bus, whose schedules sometimes doesn't fit with those of participants.

of my health because of the cold. So, I never used to go out. But now am a little used to the coldness.

Apart from when they are going to stores like Walmart and Hy-Vee, and during summer when the weather is good, participants spend most of their time indoors. Their immobility is worsened by lack of transportation, and unemployment. Coupled, these challenges make it hard for them to acculturate.

Lack of Access to Information. Four (25%) of the participants indicated that it was difficult for them to access to information about services such as the BATA bus, churches that offer free diapers or events. Lack of access to information is associated with limited personal and public means of transportation, and unavailability of husbands due to busy schedules (husbands are often relied upon to drive their spouses around Brookings). Together, these challenges limited participants' mobility. Yet, access to information could greatly help participants cope and adjust. Christine (Nepal) had this to say about lack of information:

When I came, I didn't have any information about different services like WIC, and Head Start. I knew they were for children who were born in the United States. It was not until five months after a friend told us, that I came to know about these services. That information helped us because we were able to get free milk for our children. So, there should a platform for sharing information with new comers.

Health Care Problems. Health care in America is very expensive (Cutler, Rosen and Vijan 2006). This is worse for people with low incomes that cannot afford health insurance. Most participants observed that they and their children born outside the United States lacked health insurance. Only children born in the United States and husbands had health insurance. Children born in the US were on Medicaid, which is provided by the federal Government. Eight (50%) of the participants whose children were not born in the US complained about the failure of the state of South Dakota to cover their children's health insurance. Christine (Nepal), who

previously lived in Illinois, indicated that in Illinois children are offered health insurance if the parent's income is low irrespective of where they were born. Because of lacking insurance, accessing health care was a huge challenge. Anne narrated her experiences with the high cost of health care in the following words:

Yeah, it was 250 dollars for just one week. That's too high! The doctor told me to do some physio-therapy but I told him it was too expensive I couldn't afford it. So he gave me some exercises to do. We have no insurance and we can't afford it. That's why I have some problems.

Needless to add, getting treatment or waiting too long for an appointment to see a doctor, further complicates the problem. It means that if one is very sick and needs immediate attention he may end up in the emergency room, which is abnormally expensive. Otherwise one has to wait for a long period of time as the disease matures. Sharing her experiences in respect to the above, Lilian (Nepal) narrated: "I was so surprised. I wanted to see a specialist and when my husband called, they said that gastric specialist will be in on May 12. Yet this was February. So that means I had to see the doctor on May 12! That was so ridiculous." Coupled with other challenges, like institutional limitations, inadequate access to health care on account of cost and low incomes complicates coping and adjustment.

Social and Emotional Support: Lack of Social Support. According to all but one of the participants, their husbands (all graduate students) are busy throughout the semester, which reduces the time they have with their families, thus affecting their spouses' adjustment. Given that most participants lacked close family friends and relatives, husbands are the main sources of emotional and social support. Therefore their absence means that their wives have a harder time adjusting and coping as illustrated by Claire (India): "So then, like in my case, my husband is in the department the whole day doing research and writing papers. My baby goes to school. I feel so bored while am at home. So it's very tough to stay here alone."

Two participants were unhappy about their husbands' failure to offer them enough emotional and social support. They felt that their husbands failed to understand their situation, which was close to being in jail. Phiona (China) lamented: 'Sometimes I tell him but he doesn't understand me and my situation. When I say that it's hard for me to be on F-2 visa, we quarrel and he says that I want to be troublesome, and I want to go back to China. Something like that...it stresses me so much and sometimes I cry.'

Whereas the above circumstances are important, according to most participants, despite being busy their husbands tried to be supportive. Some tried to create time to be with their wives and encouraged them to persist with the challenges they were going through as observed by Sarah (Libya): "Yes he is so busy but he gets time for the family. Especially when he is on vacation he spends it with the family. And, every time he has free time he does something with us."

Perceived social support reduces acculturative stress (Yue 2012). Helping their wives with domestic chores is one of the ways husbands could be socially supportive. This research inquired into husbands' participation in domestic chores. Twelve (75%) of the participants said that their husbands had no time to help them. However, four (25%), including Cissy (Nepal), said that their husbands were helpful: "My husband is so good. He supports me and helps me with housework."

Despite receiving social and emotional support from their spouses (and international people) some participants particularly those who were not taking ESL classes, said they lacked social and emotional support from members of the host community. This meant that they had no personal friends among the local population, otherwise it would contradict earlier findings where participants reported that members of the local community were generally supportive. However, becoming personal friends with members of the local population appears to have been made difficult by language problems as discussed in chapter five.

According to Carol (Nepal), having friends among international students from her country helped her immensely to adjust: “I can’t work here, and basically, living in family housing where there are very many Nepalese and families helped me. They helped me. We always meet and talk about our challenges. So that wasn’t a big kind of problem for me.” Hence it is safe to argue that, for participants from countries well represented in the local community, coping and adjustment is less difficult than those that are less represented.

Loneliness. Loneliness means someone lacks a person to interact with. Again, all but one of the participants highlighted loneliness as a major challenge. Loneliness was linked to husbands being too busy, being far from family, and the community being too quiet and small. Participants from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Libya said that before coming to the U.S., they lived with their extended families. Those who were not staying in extended family housing had relatives and friends not far from their homes. As such they had people to interact with and never felt lonely. Besides, most participants had jobs which kept them busy as stated by Carol (Nepal):

Actually before I came to Brookings, back in Nepal, we were staying with many people. In Nepal we live in joint families but when we came [here], especially being on F-2 visa, we had to sit in the home alone. I get kind of frustrated because we can’t work anywhere and we can’t go to school. We feel lonely in the home, mostly. That’s one of the challenges that I am facing.

Other reasons for feeling lonely included lacking intimate friends with whom to share personal problems. The few friends participants had were international students, or foreigners working in the community (see table 7.3). Yet, according to them, both categories of friends were always busy.

Table 7.3: Friends of Participants

Type of friend	Yes		No	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
International residents	7	43.75	9	56.25
American friends	5	31.25	11	68.75
International students and professionals	15	93.75	1	6.25

It is difficult for participants to make friends in the host community because they spend most of the day in the house. Language barriers also stifle opportunities to make friends. This explains why participants that were attending ESL classes, whose competency in English was improving, managed to become friends with Americans. Joy (Nepal) gave an insight into the language difficulties experienced by participants: “Another challenge is language problem. I go to Walmart and ask something but they cannot get me. So it’s hard to communicate with Americans.” All in all, the factors that led to loneliness include being away from families, lacking close friends, and being immobile. Loneliness and isolation are serious barriers to acculturation.

Cultural problems: Difficulties in Child Rearing. When people emigrate, they experience difficulties in adjusting to the new environment. Especially if the culture of the host community is different from their home culture, adjusting can be a real challenge. Participants were concerned about instilling their cultural values in their children in the face of a liberal and dominant American culture. Four (25%) of the participants stated that their children wanted to adopt only American culture, but as parents, they wanted to maintain their culture.

Similarly, four (25%) participants with school-going children observed that their children learned and adopted American culture from their peers. However, because what they learned conflicted with their home cultures, this tended to create misunderstandings between them and their parents. Christine (Nepal) said that her children had become very provocative and always

wanted to follow aspects of American culture like wearing make-up, and having sleep-overs at their friends. However, as parents she and her husband disagreed: “I don’t hate American culture but there are certain aspects of it that I don’t agree with. For example having boyfriends at an early age, sleep-overs, and make-up. I feel that there is time for all that but not now when they are young. It might disrupt their studies, which I don’t want.”

Some participants said that they lacked relatives to help them with child-rearing as was the case in their countries. Christine (Nepal) observed: “I have two kids. If I go to school, who will take care of them? That would mean that both of us would be in school and they would demand our time. So that’s our thing. Back home we would be having relatives to help, but here we are alone.”

Food-Related Issues. Seven (43.75%) of the participants had challenges with American food. These challenges were related to taste (according to some, American food tasted different than what they ate in their countries), failure to find specific types of food like *Halaal* meat, a delicacy for Muslims, and cost. According to Anna (Bangladesh),

Yeah...but we Bangladeshi have problems of food. We don’t have any Bangladeshi stores. We use Halaal meat. We have to get it in the nearby city [Sioux Falls]. But, it’s too far. We can’t easily buy any Halaal meat. All Bangladeshi food. Only Indian store, but its price is too high compared to other States. Vegetables are too expensive, yet we eat lots of vegetables.

The above problem could be because the Muslim community is small, hence it is not commercially viable for local and international stores to stock their food. Complaints about cost may be due to participants’ low incomes as highlighted in Chapter Five.

Personal Issues: Limited Career Opportunities. In the popular imagination, the United States is known as a “land of opportunity.” Thus it is not surprising that many participants came with high expectations like making money and going to school. Although these opportunities might exist, the F-2 visa restricts spouses from accessing them. They can’t go school, can’t even take an online course, and can’t find employment. To become students they have to change from

F-2 to F-1 visa, and take GRE or TOEFL exams. After spending many years redundant, two of the participants were not sure they could pass these exams. Yet for others, language barriers had them worried about taking the tests, let alone being able to compete in college once admitted. Pamela (China) expressed her fears in the following words: “So, they told me if I want to major in physiology, I need to read a lot and write a lot. So am so afraid that maybe I can’t follow most of the classes or do assignments. Yeah, I feel afraid of that. That is why I cannot go to school.”

As noted above, the F-2 visa prohibits its holders from being employed in the United States and pursuing formal education. While some participants were aware of this restriction prior to coming, others were not. Lamenting her failure to enroll for further studies or find work, Christine (Nepal) observed: “We cannot go to school without changing to F-1 visa. That challenge is tough for me because I want to go to school. So that’s my challenge.”

By curtailing their ability to work and pursue further studies, the F-2 visa limits participants’ coping and adjustment more than any other challenge. This problem is worsened by the fact that most participants had careers which they now felt had been cut short. For example, Maria (Bangladesh) lamented:

F-2 visa is not so good at all. Because in my country I was busy all the time. I was a doctor. I was always at work from morning to evening. Here am busy but with housework and taking care of the baby. No professional work. That’s why am trying to study anything or change my visa status if I get an opportunity to change.

Unrealistic Expectations. As noted above, people have many expectations about the United States. Four participants reported that they felt pressured by their families and friends, who wonder why they cannot go back to school or get jobs. The reason behind this is that many people do not understand F-2 visa restrictions. Perhaps some simply would like to see their relatives and friends succeed. Christine (Nepal) said that her family was so disappointed in her and kept urging her to resume studies in order to pursue her career. Hurtfully, she observed:

My parents and sisters visited me twice. They had never seen me stay home. And they never thought that I would ever stay at home. They had never thought that I would not be working. They want me to progress in my career, and always encouraged me, telling me to go back to school.

Finally, Phiona (China) stated that she had struggles answering intimidating questions from her husband's friends who asked her why she was still on F-2 visa. Some of them even told her that if she could not go back to school, then she should bear children. According to her, such "attacks" veiled as expectations affected her emotionally and made her feel completely dependent on her husband:

In China I was a very independent person but here.... the worst thing is when I meet my husband's friends (who are strangers to me). They ask: 'Are you going to go back to school here or to have a baby?' I don't like such questions because I am not familiar with you, I have my own plans so I don't want you to help me plan, and worst of all, they are boys. So why ask me such question?

What is fascinating about Phiona is that she is the only respondent that had found a way to earn some money despite being on F-2 visa. Her job entails translating books on-line from English to Chinese. Despite trying to be financially independent, her family and husband's friends continued attempting to "control" her life (Chen 2015), and would not listen to her pleas to be left alone. This shows that external forces play a role in cross-cultural adjustment. In Phiona's case, they act as stressors.

Identity Conflicts. In general most participants were struggling with identity problems. Many had jobs in their countries, a self-concept of importance, and productivity. Now they had been reduced to sitting at home waiting upon their husbands. As a result many were struggling with how to deal with other people's expectations. Complaints about unrealistic expectations from family members and friends were common among participants from China. But, like other challenges so far discussed, personal issues concerning careers and third party (un)realistic expectations are linked to restrictions of the F-2 visa.

In summary, the main challenges facing participants were economic, social-emotional, developmental, and contextual. Economic, social-emotional, and developmental issues were closely tied to, and emanated from the F-2 visa, and the student status of husbands of SIS. The F-2 visa restricts its holders from working and pursuing further studies. Contextual problems like inadequate public transport and access to health care services were in part linked to the rural nature of South Dakota, and inadequate finances.

Conclusion

This chapter described the acculturative experiences of participants. Experiences were perceived in positive and negative terms. Positive experiences include family growth, access to public services, acquisition of skills and knowledge, and personal development and independence. Negative experiences or challenges, were conceived as stressors. Five broad categories of stressors namely economic problems; personal issues; social support; cultural issues; and problems in local context, were identified and discussed. Economic problems include inadequate finances and unemployment. They stem from small assistantships and F-2 visa restrictions. In contrast, inadequate social and emotional support are linked to spouses' busy schedules, and lack of American friends.

While cultural issues such as those related with food and feeding are partly related to lack of adequate finances, they also stem from tensions and clashes in cultural values of the host and sojourner cultures. So are others like difficulties in child rearing, and cultural shock. It is also apparent that some personal issues, like expectations from family and friends and struggles for independence, have wider cultural implications. In particular, having spent some years in the United States, some participants have already begun espousing liberal views, such as female independence. However, these are at odds with their native cultures that their husbands and

friends spouse. Yet, the most important personal issue--lack of career opportunities--emanates directly from F-2 visa restrictions.

It appears that the positive and negative experiences discussed in this chapter are contradictory. For instance, personal development and independence and lack of career opportunities and unrealistic expectations from friends contradict. However, this is not the case, if looked at critically. Lack of career opportunities represents a failure by participants to pursue their careers and do jobs related to their training. On the other hand, personal development meant learning English, and being exposed to various cultures. Similarly, participants applauded public services like parks (which are free), but regretted being unable to access health care services because of their dire financial circumstances and cost.

Finally, some participants stated that they lacked social support, while others affirmed they had it. The former referred to social support from husbands and international residents and students, while the latter, to both husbands and Americans. Husbands were unable to offer their spouses social and emotional support because of demands of graduate study. Loneliness also resulted from children going to school. The above issues underscore the complexities of the F-2 visa experience, and “unfairness” of the F-2 visa. They are not contradictory.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the findings focusing on how they relate with the theory and literature. It is structured along Berry's (1997) acculturation framework to show the extent to which findings are relevant to theory, and how they contextualize it. Furthermore, it reflects the order in which findings were presented. Berry posited that the mode or strategy of acculturation adopted depends on a variety of individual factors that occur before or after the sojourn. The strategies adopted by SIS were integration and separation.

In order to put the discussion in proper perspective, it is important to highlight the issue(s) and research questions investigated. This research investigated acculturation of female spouses of international students to life in Brookings, specifically, how they cope and adjust. It was guided by the following questions: what are the socio-economic and cultural attributes of female spouses, and how do they impact their ability to cope and adjust to life in Brookings; what strategies and activities do spouses of international students rely on or develop in order to adjust and cope with life in the United States (Brookings); and what are the processes and experiences of coping and adjustment among spouses of different professional and cultural backgrounds?

The first section of the chapter summarizes the findings, while the second draws the conclusion. The conclusion zeroes in on the vital role played by F-2 visa regulations in shaping the entire SIS experience--from strategies and activities adopted, stressors and stresses experienced, to modes of adjustment preferred by SIS.

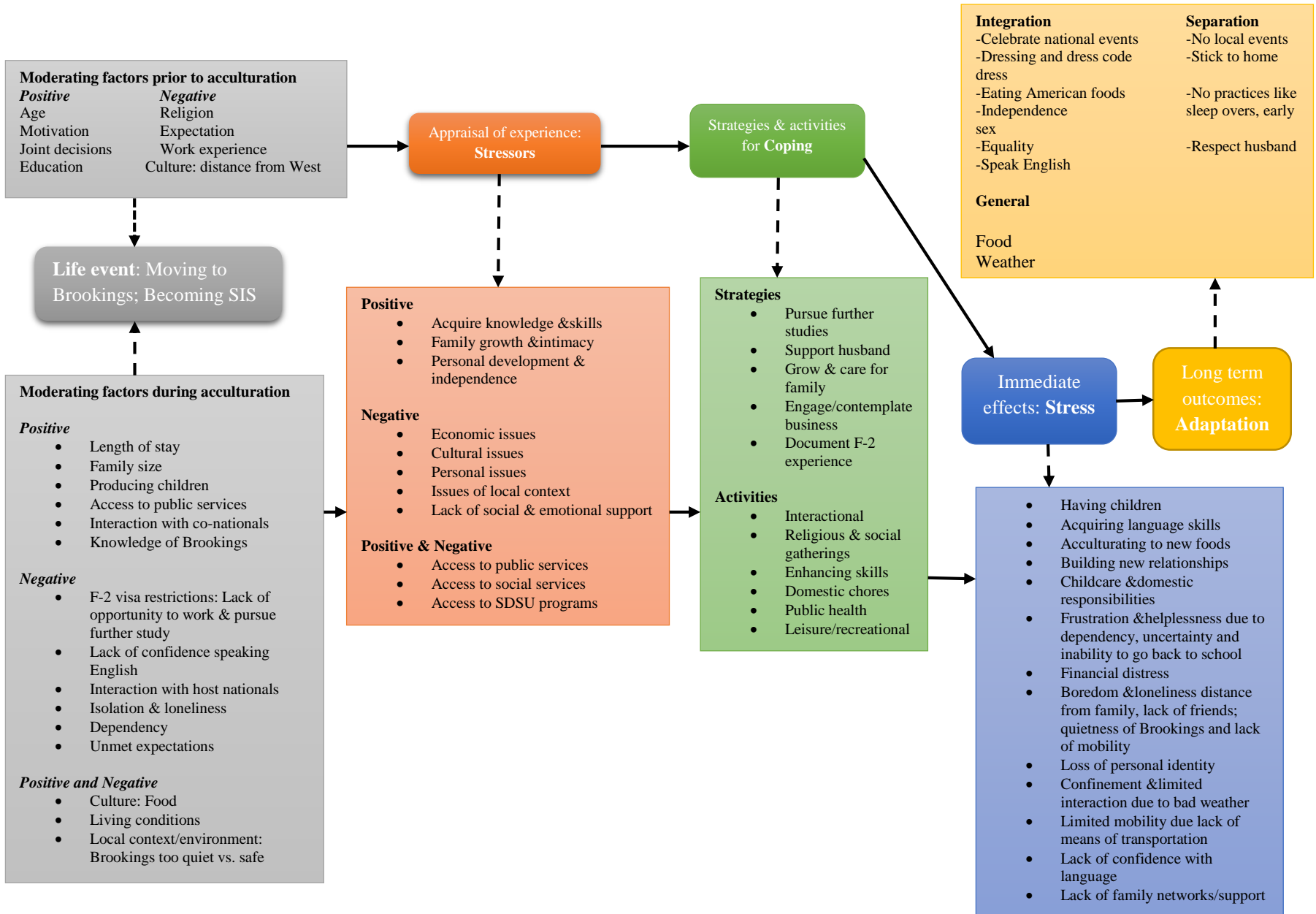
Moderating Factors Prior to Acculturation

According to Berry (1997) and Berry and Sam (1997), acculturation occurs at group and individual levels. This research focused on acculturation at the individual level. A number of

variables including age, gender, education and cultural distance act as moderators at this level prior to acculturation. Others like length of time, strategies and resources for coping, and social support are important during acculturation. In this study, age, education, motivation and joint decision making had a positive influence on acculturation. In contrast, religion, cultural distance, expectations and work experience negatively influenced acculturation. Berry and Sam's (1997) framework does not specify the nature (positive, negative or both) of influence each of the above factors might have on acculturation, other than that they moderate it. By highlighting the nature of the influence relationship, this research has made a contribution that might be useful for future research.

Positive Moderating Factors. Most participants were young, with an average age ranging between 26 and 30. Hence they were excited about traveling to the United States, learning and experiencing it. Many of SIS were also highly educated, with an average of a bachelor degree, echoing Martens and Grant's (2008) study. The age and education of SIS shows that they were in their most productive life-stage. However, their productivity is curtailed by F-2 visa regulations, which bar them from working and pursuing further education. This means that although previous studies (for example Choi 2009) posit that education positively influences attitudes toward acculturation, this may not be the case if the constraints of F-2 visa are put into consideration. The diagram below summarizes the all the findings in terms of Berry's acculturation framework:

Figure 8.1: Summary of Findings In Terms of Berry's Acculturation Framework



In contrast to previous research which found that decisions to migrate were made solely by men (Zhang et al.,2011; Goff and Carolan 2013), this research reveals that decisions to come to the United States were made jointly by SIS and their husbands, or by the husband but with support of SIS. SIS were willing to come to the United States to support their husbands (Kim 2006). In addition to this they were motivated by personal aspirations like pursuing further education; working; freedom; living easier, and better lives; and visiting big cities (Kim 2010). Hence the conclusion by the above studies that lack of decision making power negatively affects adjustment of SIS is not supported.

Notwithstanding the above, Kim (2010) observed that quite often women are pressured to move when it is their husbands that want to pursue further education. When it is the women, men rarely move, preferring to keep their jobs at home. By following their husbands, women are “forced” to “become economically dependent [which] perpetuates feminization of unpaid reproductive labor” (Kim 2010: 291). Kim (2010) helps put the above findings in proper perspective.

Negative Moderating Factors. These include religion, culture, work experience and expectations. As far as religion is concerned, this research found that sojourner experiences of Muslim SIS differed significantly from those of non-Muslims, specifically, Christians and Hindus. Unlike other SIS, Muslim SIS lacked knowledge of their husbands’ income. They also had little knowledge of Brookings because they didn’t know how to drive. Because they couldn’t drive, their movements were restricted. They also had a harder time adjusting to American dress code than other SIS. All but one stated that she could wear short, revealing clothes but only indoors. In respect to this, research by Shim and Schwartz (2007) showed that people’s behavioral practices may be favorable to adjustment, without their cultural values necessarily changing.

Besides clothing, they also struggled acculturating to what they generally perceived to be a “permissive culture” that allegedly permits women to challenge their husbands. This can be interpreted from the following statement: “We are Muslim. We obey our husbands and respect them. But here it’s a mess.” Perhaps this is why some Muslim SIS had no problem with third parties (including their husbands) being present during interviews. According to Saroglou and Mathijssen (2007:194), “strong religiousness was a big factor in developing strong identification to origin country and culture, and appeared to be an obstacle to insertion into host-country.” However, this conflict is not specific to Islam; religion in general has a “conservative and identity-shaping dimensions” (p.195).

The above findings contradict Foner and Alba’s (2008) view that religion plays a more positive role for immigrants in the U.S. than in Western Europe. Still, despite their long sojourns, religion may not play the same roles in integration of non-immigrants, such as international students, as immigrants. The benefits from religion may even differ for SIS than their husbands or members of other religions because of regulations of the F-2 visa. Moreover, despite the seeming internalization of religious oppression (Tappan 2006) by Muslim SIS, some yearned for information about ESL classes so that they could attend them and enhance their English language skills.

Another pre-sojourner factor moderating acculturation was cultural distance. Study participants were from Asia, China and Africa, which are culturally distinct and distant from the U.S. The challenges of coping and adjusting experienced by SIS in this research can be expected to be greater than would those for SIS from European/Western cultures (Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012). For example, SIS lacked confidence to communicate in English (Kim 2010); as stated above, participants from Islamic culture had a harder time acculturating than those from non-Muslim cultures because of differences in values and practices of Islamic and Western culture like culinary practices.

However, the influence of culture on adjustment was not limited to tensions between Islam and Western culture. Generally, SIS from conservative and patriarchal cultures, like Confucian/Chinese, experienced more difficulties in acculturating than Christians⁴², particularly those from Africa. Perhaps this explains why one of the Chinese SIS who had converted to Christianity in the United States loved independence and equality of females in the United States. However, loving independence may not be solely attributed to embracing Christianity. According to Goff and Carolan (2013) being educated and marrying late, coupled with communism being a liberating force for women, moderated traditional Chinese patriarchal ideology. Nevertheless, as far as other SIS from Asia are concerned, findings from Shim and Schwartz's (2007) study of Korean immigrants indicate that strong adherence to traditional Asian values result in adjustment difficulties.

In regard to work-experience, all but three SIS had worked in their respective fields of expertise for over one year. Three SIS even had work-experience of more than six years. Not only did migration put a halt on these careers, restrictions on SIS working in the United States or pursuing formal education imposed by the F-2 visa crippled, if not ended them. Restrictions on work also made SIS feel unproductive. Balgamwalla (2014:40) noted that, "For those women accustomed to contributing to the household income, the loss of wages and the lack of independent income may be particularly difficult."

Concerns about the effects of immigration law on careers of F-2 visa holders were echoed by Kim (2006, 2010) and Bordoloi (2015), while Bragun (2008) and Balgamwalla (2014) highlighted effects of the law on H-4 visa holders. Balgamwalla (2014) argued that because they

⁴² Some people like Oliver (2013) have written about the U.S. Christian conservative Right that is "shaping national and global struggles over sexuality and recognition of gay and lesbian rights" (p.89). Therefore difficulties of adjusting experienced by SIS from China and Islamic countries may be related to other factors that were not investigated than simply how these were socialized.

make women legally and economically dependent on their spouses, regulations of H-4 (which are similar to F-2) lead to professional stagnation and diminish women's public standing and personhood. SIS in this study were economically and legally dependent on their husbands; those that tried to detach themselves by becoming students (which would have made them F-1 visa holders) were unsuccessful.

Moderating Factors during Acculturation

As with the situation prior to acculturation, there were positive and negative moderating factors during acculturation. Positive factors included length of stay; family size; access to public services; and interaction with co-nationals. Negative factors were, F-2 visa restrictions; English language competencies; interaction with host nationals; isolation & loneliness; dependency and unmet expectations. This section presents a detailed discussion of some of the above factors.

Positive Moderating Factors. Shim and Schwartz (2007) found that as years of living in a host country increase, immigrants experience less difficulties adjusting to the host culture. There was a relationship between years lived in Brookings and acculturation/adjustment. Although the majority of SIS had not lived in the United States prior to coming to Brookings, 11 (68.75%) had lived in Brookings for periods ranging from 1-6 years. Of the 11, 9 had lived in Brookings between one and three years. Compared to 5(31.25%) SIS who had stayed in Brookings for less than a year, the eleven mentioned above reported to have adjusted to various aspects of the host culture and environment like food and cold weather. Despite this, their acculturation was negatively affected by restrictions of F-2 visa that limited their ability to interact with members of the host culture.

The family size of SIS was relatively small. Twelve (75%) SIS has families of 2-4 individuals. With such a size of family, acculturation of SIS should have been relatively easy. However, the process of acculturating was affected by low levels of income. SIS families are

living in poverty. This explains difficulties of coping, which involved relying on welfare services like WIK, SNAP and Medicaid. Even then, services like SNAP and Medicaid are only accessible to children born in the United States, which means that families of SIS with non-US born children have a harder time coping.

Having knowledge of the host community is a key factor in sojourner acculturation (Kashima and Loh 2006). Eight of the SIS (half the sample) were knowledgeable about Brookings. Their main sources of information about Brookings were husbands, co-national groups and the internet. Husbands and co-national group members were also important sources of emotional and social support, and communal sharing. Interaction with co-national groups was reported by all SIS. Kashima and Loh (2006:480) found that “the greater the cultural ties, the more the cultural knowledge” students in their research had acquired. Furthermore, Ward, Fox, Wilson, Stuart and Kus (2010) stated that despite the relative neglect of the family by psychologists working in the area of acculturation, recent findings indicate that the family unit is an important source of social support for members during acculturation.

In contrast, limited interaction with host nationals, responsibility for childcare, lacking means of transport, husbands’ busy schedules and not knowing how to drive were impediments to acquiring local knowledge.

Negative Moderating Factors. All factors that complicated the process of coping and adjustment like loneliness and isolation, dependency, and unmet expectations, are linked to the strict regulations attached to the F-2 visa, specifically, the bar on finding and accepting gainful employment, and pursuing formal education. For instance, because SIS are not allowed to work, they are forced to become dependent on their husbands. Because they cannot enroll into a formal course at the university unless they changed their visa from F-2 to F-1 (a process wrought with many difficulties (Bordoloi 2015), those who had aspirations to pursue further education ended

up with ruined expectations for professional advancement (Kim 2006). Kim (2006:165) noted that women have expectations, 'agendas' for coming, for example escorting husbands, education opportunities and an "idealized image of US life as desirable."

Isolation and loneliness stem directly from the regulations of F-2 highlighted above. Because SIS cannot work or go to school they end up being cut off from avenues of interaction; they also remain isolated because their spouses are busy, their children go to school and most of their co-nationals (apart from fellow SIS) either work or go to school. Another cause of loneliness and isolation of SIS is that they have limited interaction with host nationals. Other than those who were able to make friends from the host community during ESL classes, the rest lacked any American friends. Yet, many SIS were unable to attend these classes owing to lack of information, and childcare responsibilities. Despite few SIS having friends among host nationals, those that did asserted that their relationships were meaningful and supportive. The community was also depicted as being generally supportive, which is conducive for acculturating.

Although many SIS claimed to be competent communicating in English, a good number lacked the confidence to do so. According to Kim (2012), owing to incompetency in English language, SIS of Korean students became dependent on their husbands, felt incompetent, and stressed.

Negative and Positive Moderating Factors. Living conditions, specifically quality of housing, had a negative influence on coping and adjustment for SIS that lived in student family housing provided by SDSU; however, it had a positive influence on those that lived off-campus. SIS that lived on-campus complained about the size and lack of privacy of the apartments. Their poor living arrangements, added to the stress of being unemployed and redundant, made lives of these SIS difficult.

The local context/environment of Brookings also impacted coping and adjustment positively and negatively. On one hand, SIS were happy about Brookings being safe; on the other hand they didn't like it for being too quiet and small, with a limited variety of things to see or to keep them busy. This problem was worsened by limited interaction between SIS and host nationals owing to language problems, confinement at home, childcare responsibilities, lack of information about ESL, and inability to attend college.

Finally, culture, specifically food, both facilitated and negatively impacted coping and adjustment. Many SIS asserted that they were acculturating to local foods. They had access to foods they wanted in local or international stores in Brookings and Sioux Falls; however, they also had challenges with the food because of poor taste, lack of variety, having to buy spices or order them from home to improve the taste, and failure by some, especially Muslims, to access certain types of "religious" foods like Halal meat.

Appraisal of Experience (Stressors) and their Immediate Effects (Stress)

The experiences of SIS were characterized by both positive and negative stressors. In addition to these, some experiences like accessing public and social services, and programs sponsored by SDSU, impacted SIS both positively and negatively. In other words, they had a dual effect. Although all experiences of SIS or their coping and adjustment cannot be reduced to the effects of the F-2 visa and its regulations, most are directly or indirectly associated with it. Despite this, few studies on SIS, for example, Kim (2006; 2010) and Bordoloi (2015), have made this observation.

Positive Stressors and Stress Associated with Them. F-2 visa and its regulations, specifically the bar on SIS from working or pursuing formal education, mediated the experiences of SIS in a number of positive ways, most notably, ample free time. Some SIS spent this time acquiring knowledge and skills, growing families, cultivating family intimacy, and pursuing

personal development and independence. Some SIS in this study asserted that they enjoyed the sense of independence and freedom associated with women in the US, which is similar to findings by Goff and Carolan (2013) in respect to Chinese SIS.

Staying far from their families enabled SIS, their husbands and children to bond (Ward et al., 2010). Staying far from families also freed SIS from conflicts with members of their extended families. This finding echoes Kim (2010). According to her, SIS “express(ed) a sense of freedom from familial obligations to in-laws...they appreciate(ed) being able to devote themselves to motherhood... [and perhaps because of the bonding] husbands become more cooperative about householding activities” (p.292). Acquiring knowledge and skills through ESL classes was also important for forging friendships with host-nationals and SIS from other cultures.

Save for ESL classes and their outcomes, most of the positive experiences of SIS are unintended consequences of being confined and denied career opportunities as a result of regulations of the F-2 visa. For example, SIS produced children not necessarily because they wanted, but because they lacked anything to do, particularly after trying and failing to go back to school. Producing children was a coping mechanism for dealing with loneliness and boredom. However, it was stressful for SIS because they were unable to attend ESL classes due to childcare responsibilities.

Negative Stressors and Stress Associated with Them. Negative stressors were more strongly connected to F-2 visa and its regulations than positive stressors. While the connection between the latter and F-2 visa and its regulations was arrived at in the process of analyzing the data, the former were directly linked during interviews. There were more negative stressors than positive ones, which is not surprising given the harshness of F-2 visa regulations.

The most important negative experiences/stressors were economic problems like inadequate finances and unemployment. Other stressors include personal issues like unrealistic third party expectations, and identity conflicts; cultural issues like difficulties in child rearing, feeding and other food-related issues; and issues or problems in local context such as inadequate transportation, lack of access to information, and inadequate access to health care. These stressors were associated with various stresses as discussed below.

Inadequate finances and unemployment of SIS were, perhaps, the major threats to coping and adjustment. They stemmed from the small value of assistantships given to husbands of SIS, the uncertainty of having these assistantships in summer, and the bar on SIS to work. Given that assistantships are also the sources of tuition for husbands and health insurance for the entire family, very little remains for expenditure on living expenses. These challenges induced stresses like dependency, helplessness and frustration due to being unproductive and failing to support husbands financially (Balgamwalla 2014).

Financial problems were not limited to SIS whose families depended on assistantships. Even SIS whose families relied on scholarships provided by home governments had a hard time coping financially. This partly explains why some SIS initiated innovative ways to cope like doing business on the internet (e.g. translating books from other languages to English and selling them). Other ways of coping with financial difficulties were getting assistance from parents, using up savings at home, relying on remittances from jobs in home-country, and accessing social welfare services like WIK, SNAP, and Medicaid.

Personal issues like identity conflicts, unrealistic expectations and limited career opportunities were associated with stresses such as loss of identity, and feeling of being unproductive. Kim (2010:291) stated that SIS come to the US less prepared, hence struggle with downward class mobility, cultural differences, and language barriers. SIS in this study also

experienced stress arising from clashes between personal goals and third party expectations from family and friends. Third party interference with SIS by local Chinese friends was more pronounced for one of the participants from China. This is not strange given the strong patriarchal control of women in China linked to Confucian cultural ideals (Kandiyoti 1988).

Cultural issues and issues of local context were indirectly related with the F-2 visa and its regulations. For instance, boredom, and limited interaction with hosts stemmed from limited mobility and language barriers. Limited mobility stemmed from lacking a car, as a result of inadequate finances. If SIS were allowed to work, perhaps these problems would have been mitigated. Lack of access to information was also predicated on lack of interaction with host nationals due to limited mobility and bad weather.

Conflicts between home and host cultures, and lack of family networks resulted in difficulties in child rearing like children wanting to invite friends for sleep-overs, or wearing make up at a young age against their parents' wishes. This finding resonates with Kim's (2012), finding that conflicts between Korean SIS and their children stemmed from children adopting American culture, which was incongruent with their parents' traditional culture. Kim's (2010) idea of "micro-householding" further contextualizes these findings. She noted that SIS have to learn new methods of householding like:

banking, contacting utility companies, operating appliances, organizing activities...If they are from countries in which English is not an official language, the language barrier presents a significant challenge...Language ability becomes especially demanding when wives have to interact socially with local populations...child rearing may involve arranging play day activities and meeting and developing a rapport with teachers at day centers, kindergartens, and schools (p.291).

Finally, dependency on welfare services like SNAP and Medicaid, and accessing programs provided by SDSU as well as public services like parks and the children's museum,

were stressful both positively and negatively. Given that most SIS and their husbands were employed before their sojourn, it was stigmatizing to depend on SNAP and Medicaid. At the same time, because of their current financial predicament, these services were indispensable for their families' survival.

Strategies and Activities for Coping and Adjusting

Strategies. Faced with the above stresses, SIS relied on various strategies and activities to cope and adjust. Participants aspired toward pursuing further education. However, despite being qualified, none was admitted to any course of study. Failure to pursue further education was attributed to childcare responsibilities (Kim 2006, 2010), language barriers (Kim 2010), and difficulties overcoming constraints imposed by F-2 regulations (Kim 2006; Bordoloi 2015; Goff and Carolan 2013).

Failing to realize their dreams of furthering their education, some SIS chose to grow their families by producing children, and nurturing them as well as caring for their husbands. SIS in Kim's (2006) study stated, "it was about time" to have babies, but once the babies were around, SIS got stuck into carework, with some learning to become housewives in the US (having been professional women in Korea.) However, carework was viewed in contradictory ways--as indispensable for husbands' success and child rearing, and self-deprecating, in terms of being a "maid."

To deal with unemployment and dependency, some SIS contemplated engaging in entrepreneurial activities; in fact, one participant from China was using the internet to sell books she translated from Chinese to English. This is not a unique strategy (Teshome 2010). According to Teshome (2010) SIS in her study were involved in buying and selling stuff on eBay. Finally, because of the weight of the F-2 experiences, one participant had plans to document them.

Supporting husbands to pursue their education by shouldering all or most house work and child care responsibilities was perhaps the predominant strategy of SIS. Many SIS observed that this was the main reason they had come to the US (Kim 2006). Despite genuinely being important, this strategy has some disadvantages. It “domesticated” SIS, especially those that were involved in formal employment prior to coming to Brookings. According to Kim (2006, 2010), this strategy inadvertently perpetuates traditional gender roles, and upholds family values at the expense of individual career goals. (As in many other studies, SIS promoted their husbands’ careers but sacrificed theirs. Referring to Chinese SIS, Goff and Carolan (2013:147) used the concept “sacrificial woman” to capture this outcome. Some SIS in Goff and Carolan’s (2013) study chose to stick to traditional Chinese gender ideology of a caring and loving mom and tough father (p.146).

Growing families and caring for them, like supporting husbands, also perpetuates patriarchal gender role norms. According to Kim (2006), reproduction and carework frees up the husband to study and work, enables him to pursue his goals, and perpetuates his role as breadwinner, at the same time as it subordinates SIS, and throws them into dependency (Kim 2010). This has long-term impacts on career aspirations of SIS whose careers stall (Kim 2006). The culprit in all this is the F-2 visa and its regulations (Kim 2006; 2010). Despite advances made in realizing gender parity in the US over the decades, it is surprising that US immigration law still acts as a vehicle for “reproduce[ing] hetero-patriarchal householding norms [that] operate to sustain the gendered social order” (Kim 2010:290).

Strategies like attempts to embark on further studies, contemplating venturing in business, growing families, and waiting and anticipating, reveal that the lives of SIS involve power struggles and bargaining within the household and beyond (Agarwal 1997). Attempts to embark on further studies, for instance, are struggles against constraints placed on SIS by the state through F-2 regulations. SIS seek to empower themselves by going back to school, but

failing to do so, they resort to having babies, a bargain within the household. As discussed above, biological reproduction is both empowering and disempowering; children make it difficult for SIS to access services like ESL classes, however, they also help them overcome loneliness.

SIS are not only domesticated by F-2 regulations (Kim 2010); these regulations are so strong that no matter what SIS try to do, they cannot overcome their constraints. The only chance for SIS to get a shot at the promise of America (which most imagine in their home countries) is waiting in anticipation that their husbands would complete their degrees, be employed in the US and petition for them. While possible, this strategy is a big gamble, and does not compensate for the lost opportunities and potential of SIS. According to Balgamwalla (2014), spouses of H1-B visa holders (whose H-4 visa is similar to F-2) not only risk being divorced and subjected to domestic violence, but also losing their children should their husbands dissolve their marriages. Like the H-4, F-2 also “introduce elements of forced dependency into ...marital relationship[s]” (p.29).

Activities. SIS relied on five broad activities to cope and adjust: interactional activities; religious and social gatherings; enhancing skills; domestic chores and public health; and leisure/recreational activities. Interactional activities included those based on electronics and social media like skypeing, facebooking, watching movies on TV and Youtube, telephoning, and listening to radio. These activities served the purpose of mobilizing social support, relaxing, dealing with loneliness and developing skills.

Findings on interactional activities above, echo those in Ye’s (2006) research. Ye (2006:10) stated that “women were more satisfied with their interpersonal support networks than men,” in addition, “the level of online group activity was positively linked to both perceived online informational support and emotional support.” According to her, there was less likelihood for those more satisfied with interpersonal networks to suffer from three types of acculturative

stress: fear, perceived discrimination and perceived hatred (p.12). However, online networks were mostly good for informational, rather than emotional, support (p.15).

There were differences in choice of activities between SIS from different regions and religions. SIS from Asia were more involved in personal and social support activities than those from Africa who were more involved in religious activities. Muslim and Christian SIS were involved in prayer meetings, preparing communal meals, and interacting in gatherings. Because they lacked a religious place where they could meet, Hindus were not involved in similar activities, however, they held gatherings and interacted with their co-nationals in their homes. Religious and social activities helped SIS to cope with loneliness, and also afforded them the opportunity to interact with co-nationals, be outdoors, and make friends. These findings are supported by Lewthwaite's (1996) and Kim's (2012) studies.

Activities organized by SDSU like ESL classes, crocheting, knitting and US friends benefited SIS by improving their English, communication skills, and confidence; they also enabled them to deal with loneliness, interact, and make friends. Kim's (2012) study supports the above findings. Korean SIS studied by Kim recaptured personal strength through art and learning to persevere, and engaging in meaningful activities like volunteering in church, and participating in Korean cultural ceremonies, food events and language classes (p.762). These activities bolstered participants' confidence, achievement, and individual strength (p.764). However, some SIS in the current research were unable to participate in the above activities because of a lack of finances to pay for daycare and baby sitters, childcare responsibilities, pregnancy and child birth, and lack of information. As stated earlier, Muslim SIS were more likely not to participate in these activities than were others.

While domestic chores like cooking, childcare, and hygiene kept SIS busy, helped maintain family stability and kept husbands in school (Kim 2006), they had negative implications

on career trajectories of SIS. This observation is important as it exposes the problems hidden in immigration law, particularly entrenchment of patriarchy and female domestication by F-2 visa regulations. Like the H-4 visa given to spouses of foreign professionals, F-2 visa domesticates women by denying them the opportunity to work (Balgamwalla 2014).

According to Balgamwalla (2014:35), this denial forces them to “relinquish [their] opportunities for broader social and economic participation;” and denies them independence, robs them of a basic human right--the right to be self-sufficient through work (Bragun 2008). Professionals (husbands) who enjoy this right, also have access to accompanying capabilities like “obtaining social security coverage, bank accounts, credit history, and other privileges” (Bragun 2008:938) that are crucial for functioning socially and economically in the United States (Balgamwalla 2014). In contrast, spouses are “deprived of the ability to function in society [and unknowingly] their fate is sealed for an indefinite number of years” (Bragun 2008:938). The law empowers the men to exercise these rights at the expense of their spouses (Balgamwalla 2014). These stifling immigration regulations have broader individual and policy implications (Bragun 2008:938):

Being unable to work makes America seem like a golden cage: even though you live in a country of opportunities, most of them are beyond your reach. Like a bird in a cage, you are allowed to stay in the United States but cannot do much more than that. The consequences of such circumstances are often tragic because many men abuse the power given to them by the law: some women get only weekly allowances for food; others are forbidden from calling their families or taking English classes; and still others become victims of domestic violence. Depending on their husbands for absolutely everything, including the right to remain in the United States, many women are forced to stay in marriages they desperately need to escape. This problem is not marginal--every year, approximately 70,000 newcomers become trapped in their golden cages under the current law.

Long-term Outcomes of Coping and Adjustment

Adjustment/adaptation is of two forms: psychological and socio-cultural (Berry 1997). This research focused on socio-cultural adaptation. In view of the length of time spent in Brookings (1-6 years), many participants were in the final stage of adjustment--the "settle-down stage" (Yeh 2001). In this stage people accept their situation. Few SIS were still in the struggling stage (Yeh 2001); those who were reported problems with language and lack of social support from host-nationals and their husbands who were busy.

In line with Berry's theory of acculturation, integration and separation were the main modes of adaptation of SIS rather than assimilation and marginalization. According to Berry (1992), acculturation involves the process of culture learning as exemplified by integration. When sojourners integrate, they adopt aspects of the host culture and maintain some aspects of their home cultures. Despite being religiously and culturally conservative, Asian (Muslim and Hindu) and Chinese SIS adopted integration. Christian SIS from Africa were also integrating. Parents were socializing children in home cultures, like language and greeting, and in American culture, so as to enable them "fit" in (Wakil, Siddique and Wakil 1981). In turn, they were also being socialized by their children in American culture, for instance its culinary practices and language (Devor 1970; Luykx 2005).

SIS from Asia and China also liked American values like gender equality, independence and freedom; some were also adjusting to the dress code. According to Goff and Carolan (2013) SIS from China had embraced the above empowering values of American culture. Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999) found that sojourners who integrate experience less depression than the non-integrated because they can draw from resources in both cultures to deal with it (see Berry 1997).

Separation was pursued by Muslim SIS from Africa and a few from Asia. The reasons cited for separating include dislike of permissiveness of American culture, sleep-overs, early sex,

and presumed women's disrespect of husbands. In contrast, Muslim SIS from Bangladesh adopted integration. One would have expected that all Muslims would have pursued this strategy. Therefore, as far as modes of adaptation are concerned, the role of religion was ambiguous.

General Adjustment. Food and bad weather were some of the aspects of the host culture and environment to which many SIS had generally adapted (newly arrived SIS were still struggling with these compared to their counterparts). However, SIS were experiencing problems with food like limited variety, tastelessness, heavy meat-based diets, unavailability of some foods (e.g. Halal meat), and high cost. Some home-foods were unavailable in local stores in Brookings, prompting SIS families to travel to Sioux Falls where there are more international stores. To eat local foods, SIS had to enhance its taste with spices ordered from home countries. Furthermore, few SIS families ate in restaurants because of low income and love for home foods. As mentioned above, school-going children were instrumental in their families' adjustment to American food.

The above findings are supported by Brown, Edwards and Hartwell's (2010) research about meanings attached to food by international students in England. These researchers found that preference for home food was associated with emotional comfort and re-assurance; home food was also preferred to local food because local food was "deemed to be *tasteless, bland and boring*" (p.204) (emphasis in original); to enhance its taste, students ordered for spices from home. As in the current research, these students were open to new food, hence exhibited two food personalities, which suggests they were integrating.

Furthermore, English food was less preferred because of its high fat content, hence avoiding weight gain was important in food choices of students. Students cooked to avoid eating canned and local food; in the current research, this decision was based on avoiding cost as a result of financial distress. Moreover, as in Brown et al.'s (2010) research, SIS in this study complained

about the high cost of organic food. Finally, as in this research, Brown et al. (2010) found that preparing and sharing food was an important leisure activity. Food played a key role in sociability and assertion of national identity.

Limitations of the Research

This research relied on a small sample, hence its findings are not generalizable to the entire population of SIS in the United States or even South Dakota. Despite this, they paint a clear picture of the unique circumstances experienced by SIS as a result of restrictions placed on them by immigration law. The experiences of coping and adjusting of SIS in this study are well supported by existing literature.

Apart from a limited sample size, some interviews were affected by third party interference from husbands and in-laws that resulted in omitting two interviews from the analysis. I also experienced challenges associated with recruitment like mistrust and suspicion among Muslim SIS, and lack of records of all SIS associated with the University.

Areas of Further Research

The role of religion in adjustment of Muslim SIS vis-à-vis SIS from other religions needs to be investigated. Tarakeshwar, Stanton and Pargament (2003) argued that although its importance may vary overtime and place, but because of salience to people across cultures, religion needs to be included in cross-cultural studies. Furthermore, religion is an important predictor of health across cultures, and a resource for coping (p.379-80).

A study of SIS and international students focusing exclusively on coping and adjustment to food, preferably one combining qualitative and quantitative methods, might reveal interesting cross-cultural findings that extend insights from this, and Brown et al's., (2010) study. Steptoe,

Pollard and Wardle (1995) developed the Food Choice Questionnaire which might be adopted or modified to suit the needs of such a study.

More research on how constraints of F-2 visa impact SIS is urgently needed, and can benefit from relatively more extensive research on H-4 visa that is similar to F-2.

Practical Suggestions

This section highlights practical implications stemming from the findings. The first, and perhaps most important is the need by the federal government to ease the bar on SIS to pursue further studies or seek employment. SIS could be allowed to work on campus or off-campus for a limited amount of time; in addition, those that qualify should be allowed to pursue further studies as long as they demonstrate ability to pay or offer of assistantship. Given the relatively small size of assistantships offered to husbands of SIS, allowing the women to work not only would bolster family incomes (hence enhancing families' wellbeing), it would greatly improve their husbands' academic performance as it would reduce their financial worries.

As highlighted in the conclusion below, it is not clear whether regulations of F-2 visa barring SIS from seeking employment in the United States encompass self, as well as formal employment. Furthermore, although SIS were accessing some social services like WIC, they had obtained information about these services from informal sources. Therefore, SIS need to be given the right information to avoid violating immigration law including accessing social services for which they do not qualify. On the other hand, if they qualify, having the right information would increase utilization of these services that many participants said were vital for their survival in Brookings.

Although SDSU implements programs like ESL classes aimed at assisting SIS to cope and adjust, its role in the lives of SIS is still limited. For instance, the Office of International Affairs (OIA) lacks complete records of all SIS at SDSU, despite issuing invitation to their

husbands. The office needs to make it mandatory for all students to register their spouses upon setting foot in the United States. This would enhance its ability to design and implement programs targeted at SIS.

Despite yearning for ESL classes, some participants were unable to attend them because they had nowhere to leave their children. SDSU needs to explore possibilities of working with SIS to find ways of providing daycare assistance to those interested or involved in its programs. This recommendation is backed by evidence from other studies such as that of Martens and Grant (2008:66). According to these scholars, SIS were willing to be involved in development and delivery of programs meant for them, but could only do so if they had assistance with childcare.

Conclusion

Research on acculturation of SIS has pointed to the effects of F-2 visa, however, other than Kim (2006; 2010) and Bordoloi (2015), no other research has emphasized how regulations of the F-2 visa cripple SIS, the majority of whom are women⁴³. This research has shown that experiences of SIS are significantly impacted by the regulations of F-2 visa, which prohibit SIS from working and pursuing further studies. By doing so, they restrict them to an American experience of unemployment, economic and legal dependency, and deny them basic fundamental rights, specifically the right to work and self-determination (Bragun 2008 and Balgamwalla 2014). SIS become lonely and frustrated, and once they enter the United States, their careers are severely impacted or cut short.

The F-2, like the H-4, is a unique type of visa, not just because of how it disproportionately impacts more women than men (women tend to be mostly the holders of these

⁴³ Studies by Balgamwalla (2014) and Bragun (2008) focused on H-4 visa which has similar restrictions as F-2 visa.

visas), but because the constraints it imposes on them perpetuate archaic patriarchal norms and familial arrangements (Kim 2010) that violate basic human rights (Bragun 2008). Moreover, in contrast to the American traditional stay-at-home mom, SIS feel “forced” by state policies into carework (Kim 2006). By imposing harsh restrictions on women, legal regulations “normalize conventional gender division of carework...” (Kim 2006:166).

Despite their harshness, F-2 visa regulations are somewhat unclear. For example, it is not clear whether working or engaging in business is limited to operating in physical or institutional settings, or also encompasses online activities. If on-line activities like translating books from one language to another, or buying and selling stuff on eBay is “work” or “business,” then some SIS are unknowingly violating their visas. Unlike international students who undergo orientation and continue having access to the International Students’ Office, SIS do not undergo any orientation; they have access only to secondary information from their husbands and co-nationals in colleges and those working in college towns.

These and other challenges highlighted above raise some serious practical implications, for instance the need to supply SIS with the right and comprehensive information or have a platform for sharing information; as a prerequisite for the foregoing, OIA to develop and maintain a comprehensive register of all SIS at SDSU; easing regulations of F-2 pertaining to work and pursuing further education; and consulting with SIS in the process of designing and implementing programs meant to improve their coping and adjustment.

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APPENDIX

Section A: Background characteristics, Living conditions and Social Life

Background characteristics						
<i>S</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Response category</i>				
1	What is your country of origin?					
2	Where were you living before coming to SDSU?					
3	How long have you lived in Brookings?					
4	What is your native language?	a)				
		b)				
		c)				
		d)				
		e)				
5	Are you comfortable to communicate in English?	Yes		No		
6	What is your level of English competence/ability?	Low	Moderate		High	
7	What is your highest level of education?	None	primary	High school	Tertiary	Degree & above
8a	What is your field of professional expertise?					
8b	How long have you practiced in this field?					
9	Could you tell me how old you are?					
10	How big is your family?					
11	What is your religion/faith?					
12	What is the family's source of income?	Assistantship	Home country employment	Part-time job	Other	

13	Could you give an estimate of what the family earns from each of the above sources of income monthly?	\$.....	\$.....	\$.....	\$.....	
14	Are you a beneficiary of any of the following social welfare services?	WIK	Yes		No	
		SNAP	Yes		No	
		Medicaid	Yes		No	
		Subsidized housing	Yes		No	
15	How beneficial to your family are the above services?					
Living conditions and Social Life						
16	a) Are you conversant with Brookings?	Yes		Go to b; then	No	Go to c
	b) How did you get to know your way around? Do you drive in Brookings?	17				
		self	International friends	Local friends	Husband	
	c) Have you tried to learn about Brookings?	Yes			No	
	d) How	a)				
		b)				
		c)				
		d)				
		e)				
17	a) What motivated you to come to Brookings?	a) People:				
		b) Weather:				
		c) Food:				
		d) Culture:				
		Other..				

	<p>b) Was it your decision or your husband's decision?</p> <p>c) What were your expectations about life in United States/Brookings before you came?</p>			
	d) Which of your expectations were met?	<p>a)</p> <p>b)</p> <p>c)</p> <p>d)</p>		
	e) What adjustments have you made (if any)?			
18	a) Are you happy with the quality of the house you presently live in?	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes <i>go to b</i></td> <td>No <i>go to c</i></td> </tr> </table>	Yes <i>go to b</i>	No <i>go to c</i>
Yes <i>go to b</i>	No <i>go to c</i>			
	b) What aspects/features of the house are you happy with?	<p>a)</p> <p>b)</p> <p>c)</p> <p>d)</p>		
	d) What aspects/features are you not happy with/about?	<p>a)</p> <p>b)</p> <p>c)</p>		
	e) How do you compare it with the one you were living in before you come here?	<p>a)</p> <p>b)</p>		
19	a) What foods do you like? (American foods or your traditional foods?)	<p>a)</p> <p>b)</p> <p>c)</p> <p>d)</p>		
	b) Do you get the food you like to eat?	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> </tr> </table>	Yes	No
Yes	No			
	c) Where do you get the food you to eat?	<p>a) Local grocery stores in Brookings</p> <p>b) International store in Brookings</p>		

		c) Farmers' Market				
		d) International stores in Sioux Falls				
		e) Local food pantry				
		f) Other sources e. g.....				
	d) Are you able to prepare the food the way you would like?	Yes		No		
	e) What types of local food do you eat?	a)				
		b)				
		c)				
		d)				
		e)				
	g) Do you prepare this food at home?	Yes		No		
	h) What have you done to get used to liking and eating local food?	a)				
		b)				
		c)				
		d)				
20	a) Do you have friends from the local community? (from host community)	Yes # (go to b)		No		
	b) How long have you been friends?					
	c) Do you have friends among international students/ Int'l professionals in Brookings?	Yes # (go to d)		No		
	d) How long have you been friends?					
	e) How often do you interact with friends from the local community	Always	Sometimes		Rarely	
	f) How do you interact with friends from the local community?	Telephone	Email	Visit	Social media	
	g) Where do you interact from?	Home	Church	Local store	Social gathering	Internet
	h) How often do you interact with international student friends/families?	Always		Sometimes		Rarely
	i) How do you interact with international student friends/families?	Telephone	Email	Visit	Social media	

	j) Where do you interact from?	Home	Church	Local store	Social gathering	Internet
21	a) Where do you spend your leisure time?	Home	Movies	Social gathering	Local store	Church
	b) How do you spend your leisure time (activities)? c) Have you been on vacation since you come? Where, how did you like it?	a)				
		b)				
		c)				
		d)				
		e)				

Section b: Coping

1. What challenges or stresses, have you faced as a spouse of an international student since you came to Brookings? (**Probe questions:** *Could you discuss challenges related to work, and your career; relationship between you and your family; domesticity; weather, food, and local culture? Do you get any help in taking care of children? Has your family suffered any human/other losses? Did you get any support for the loss? Do you spend enough time with your spouse? Could you explain the quality of your relationship since you came? Has anything changed in the way you used to relate before you came? What has changed? From whom do you get social support? Could you explain to me the kinds of social support you get from Brookings community; home; your husband?)*
2. In general, how do you perceive your situation (both in positive and negative way) as spouse on F-2 visa? (**Probe:** *do you think are you worse off than you were back home, are you worse off than the women in the host community? What makes you think this way?*)
What lessons have you learnt?
b) What lessons have you learnt as a spouse on F-2visa?
3. What things (e.g. activities) do you engaged in to cope with life in Brookings? (**Probe questions:** *Do you engage in the following activities: interaction with members of the local community; communication with people at home; attending church or other religious ceremonies; practicing*

hobbies; improving your English language proficiency; volunteering; visit local/international students or families? Where do these activities take place? How often? Who organizes or initiates them? Are they free?)

b) Which of the above activities are more effective, and why?

4. What tactics (short term) do you rely on, use or have you developed in order to cope (*Probe questions: could you explain to me the tricks or innovative ways you have developed in order to cope in certain situations e.g. social media- Facebook and Skype, visiting friends etc.)*

5. What strategies (long term measures) have you relied on or developed in order to cope (*Probe questions: Could you discuss the long term measures you have taken to be able to cope, for instance, how do you deal with loneliness; food and feeding; dealing with language difficulties; getting social support? When do you use the above strategies? How do you use them?)*

6. How do you relate with members of the local community? (*Probe questions: Do you feel welcome? Do you feel excluded/segregated or do you feel you are part of the local community?*). To what extent have members of the local community been helpful?

7. Are you aware of any programs for female spouses that SDSU or the community have put in place? (*Probe questions: Could you describe them? Do you participate in these programs? How have they helped you to fit into the local community?*

Section C: Adjustment

1) In general, how would you categorize yourself in relation to your culture and the host culture:

- a. I have adapted to the host culture (*what aspects of it have you adjusted to e.g. food, dress code, child rearing practices etc*)
- b. I have stuck to my culture (Could you explain why?)
- c. I am in between the two cultures (*what aspects of your culture have you dropped or eased on; what aspects of the host culture have you adapted?*)
- d. I do not relate with any of the two cultures (could you tell me why?)

2. Apart from the culture, what other aspects of life in Brookings or your life as an F-2 visa holder have you adjusted to? (Probes: weather; career, etc.)

b. What factors facilitated the adaptation/adjustment you mentioned above? (**Probe:** e.g. members of host community, international students and families, internet; local church/religious group etc. How well did the individual factors and activities help in the process?)

3). Compared to the first months when you come and right now, do you think you have adjusted to life in Brookings?*(is there any difference in the way you feel?)*

4) How do you find information about different social services, and activities in Brookings (Probe on: affordable services, hospitals, stores, churches, children's activities, etc. *(do you know any information about affordable or free services that would benefit women on F-2 visa? How has this information helped you in the process of adjustment?)*)

5. What activities or services do you think would be beneficial to F-2 visa female spouses in Brookings community?

6. Is there any other information related to this topic that you would like to share with me?

C: Photo voice

Take photographs that describes your best moments and your lowest moments in Brookings.

1. Could you describe what these photographs mean in regards to your coping and adjustment to life in Brookings?